



勇者の
楽じゃないも

理由？
俺が

神

だから

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YUUSHA NO FURI MO RAKU JANAI—
RIYUU? ORE GA KAMI DAKARA—
— Even Posing as a Hero is Easy--Why? Cause I'm a God —

- Volume 1 -
HERO'S EXAMINATION ARC

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– SYNOPSIS –

One of the 8 million gods, Keika Hiko-no-Mikoto failed at gaining believers in Japan.

He got thrown off to another world when he was going back to Heaven in disappointment.

That other world, Alexsild, had been mostly seized by the demon king.

Mysteriously, Keika who should have been invisible to other people could be seen normally like a normal human.

And then, a princess knight told him that he could ascend to Godhood if he piled up achievements as a hero.

Keika decided to defeat the demon king and become a God in that world.

By the way, unlike other people, Keika can see the ability values of people.

He can also see Skill Tree.

Why? Cause he's a God.

The travel journal of God Keika as a hero begins–



PROLOGUE

A big city in Japan.

I, Keika Hiko-no-Mikoto, am looking down at a large construction site from a tall mansion.

My deep blue Wafuku is fluttering from the wind, the Tachi on my waist is swaying.

<TLN: Wafuku=traditional Japanese clothing, Tachi=long Japanese sword.>

The construction site is flattening everything. It seems they're readjusting the land for Olympic.

Excavators are digging out the road, bulldozers are moving the earth and sand.

And my Go-shintai (object of worship)--which has been degraded from a deity statue to a big rock is broken down while being moved away.

Haah, I sighed while looking up. My Geta make an empty sound when I lower my legs behind. *<TLN: Geta=traditional Japanese sandals.>*

"After 1000 years of hard works.... I failed being a god...."

I was once a respectable God counted in the first digit among the myriad of Gods.

But, I behaved arrogantly without currying favor with humans.

However, that was a mistake.

Especially when I didn't name myself in the dream of Norinaga Motoori when he was working on recreating the Kojiki during Edo era. *<TLN: The Kojiki is a collection of myths concerning the origin of the four home islands of Japan, and the Kami/Gods.>*

Why must I butter up with humans?

I couldn't understand at that time.

When even that Amaterasu Oomikami visited Norinaga Motoori's bedside.

I had forgotten that the original Kojiki was already lost.

In the end my name disappeared from the Kojiki and I became a vagrant god.
Nevertheless, there were still shrines that worshiped my Go-shintai.
However, during the Shimbutsunri in Meiji period, shrines with nameless gods
were crushed in the name of Kirishitan.
After that, my Go-shintai was put on a three-way intersection road and collected
beliefs a little bit.

--But.

As you can see. My Go-shintai was crushed during the ground leveling of the
construction work.
It's now impossible for me to contact people.

This is the fate of an arrogant god who didn't curry favor with humans.
I have nothing now.

I lightly shook my head. There's nothing I can do even if I indulge in sentiment.
I can't repair it no matter how much I regret it.
"--I'm going home."

I take the water gourd on my waist and sprinkle water around me.

And then I put my hands together and chant.

"O one who connects heavens and time, Heaven Bird Ship God. Comply to my calling
and open the road to the beyond! <<Spirit World Gate>>"

Bwoosh--, a rainbow colored round space opened in front of me.

I announced that I would become a deified god worshiped by many people when I
descended from Takamagahara, yet I'm going home empty-handed now, just what
should I say. <TLN: Takamagahara, essentially Japan's Olympus.>

I feel melancholic just thinking about it--Hm?

"Ah, darn! I forgot to set the destination!"

It had been a really long time since I chanted the spell to move between dimensions that I completely forgot about it.

As my body being sucked in, my fingers grab the edge of the rainbow gate to desperately resist.

"W-wait a minute! Stop! Freeze!"

It won't stop with just shouting. Tremendous sucking power.

As expected of the power of God who still have believers.

A leftover can't possibly win.

My fingers got irresistibly separated from the edge of the gate.

I get sucked in vigorously, my body and view are shaking round and round.

The blue sky, white cloud and brown construction site are becoming far away as if they're mixed together.

"Uwaaaa! Stop! I want a reset, stupid!!"

I violently swing my arms around to resist, but they're powerless against a spell that has been invoked.

I got blown off to beyond the dimension, not knowing where I was going.

CHAPTER 1

IT'S ANOTHER WORLD NO MATTER HOW YOU LOOK AT IT

Among the thick bushes in the green trees.

I woke up and opened my eyes.

There were trees, flowers, bugs and animals I had never seen before.

"I've gone and done it...."

I put my hands inside my Wafuku's breast pocket while walking.

Walking on the soft humus of the forest with my Geta feels nice.

Well whatever, I can just chant the spell again and go back.

I need pure water to do that. I've used up the water in my gourd already.

"What a gloomy forest. Would be nice if there were a spring or a streamlet here--

<<Senrigan>>." <TLN: literally Clairvoyance.>

My eyes are shining. Looking far ahead.

--However, the forest is too dense, I can't really see well. It's a surprisingly vast forest.

"It can't be helped. I'll look for someone I can talk to."

I look around restlessly while still using Senrigan.

And then I found one huge tree. It's twice as tall as the other trees, its trunk is so thick even ten adults joining hands won't be able to fully hug it.

It'd certainly be a Go-shintai if it were in Japan. A will has probably resided in it. The master of this forest.

"Alright. Let's ask that guy."

I stepped firmly on the undergrowth of the forest.

I've arrived near the big tree. It's thicker than it's taller. A dignified posture.

I look at it from top to bottom, making sure if I can trust it.

I don't feel any wicked aura. Looks like it's a good guy.

"Hey, 'scuse me, is there a streamlet or a spring nearby? Some clean one that can be used for magic."

And then the branches that faces right sway. It seems to be over there.

"Thanks."

I put my hand up to show my gratitude and walk toward the direction it told me.

I walk in the forest while feeling the sunshine filtering through the foliage for a while. It's a virgin forest that hasn't been intruded by people much, there's a lot of moss-covered trees and rocks.

Footprints from my Geta are left on the ground.

And then, I arrived at an open space inside the forest.

It's about as large as a gymnasium, there's no tree growing here.

The warm sunlight are pouring down. Looks like it's noon.

It's covered in green like a lawn. There's a small spring with clean water in one corner of the open space.

"Hm?"

I stopped walking and tilted my head in puzzlement.

There's a woman tied up on a huge rock beside the spring.

A long waist-length blond hair and blue eyes. Her big breasts are constricted. She has an adult-like charm but I can feel maiden-like youthfulness. It's a strong-willed

looking woman in her late teens.

She has a nice figure but she's probably a young girl, so I thought.

However, her clothing are unusual.

A red skirt and white coat that I've only ever seen in games and manga (even Gods play around in their free time). She's wearing a silver breastplate, there's a rapier on her waist.

She looks like a female knight that appears in fantasy.

The woman who's chained to the rock with a collar is sitting exhaustedly with her head hanging down.

Her figure with blond hair hanging on her white cheeks looks fleetingly beautiful.

--Well, it has nothing to do with me.

It's an unknown world. It could be troublesome if I carelessly meddled. The problem is not with this girl, but if I offend the Gods of this world.

There should be Gods in this world too, and the woman's situation looks like some kind of ritual no matter how you look at it. Looking closer, there are some kind of liquor bottles and fruits around the girl.

I don't have any excuse to seize an offering dedicated for the Gods of this world. I can't complain even if she's killed.

....Moreover, I'm already tired of helping people.

For now I just want to spend my days holing up in Takamagahara.

I crossed the open space while my Geta were resounding.

And then I step on the spring curb. I open my Wafuku's hem showing my calf.

And then I crouch down and hold my gourd in my hand. To draw the water.

A face with black eyes and black hair is reflected on the mirror-like water. It's relatively good looking.

And then.

The female knight suddenly raised her head. The beautiful blond hair leaped, and her beautiful face was shown.

"Y-you! Are you a traveler?! Save me! Now!"

I creased my forehead.

--Is that an attitude when you're asking a God....--Eh?

"Wait a minute! You can see me!?"

"What are you saying! Of course I can see you! --There's no more time! Save me quickly!"

The female knight wriggled and appealed desperately. The chains on her neck rang. She seems to be quite frantic, her way of talking is mixed between polite and overbearing.

I think for a moment.

The world is probably made with Gods being able to be seen.

The Gods of this world appear to be quite fond of limelight.

If I take the offering for such Gods--.

I've decided what to do.

"No can do."

"W-why--!"

"In any world, there must a reason for someone to get chained, either they did something bad or some kind reason. I can't free you without knowing the

circumstances."

"--U!"

The female knight bites her red lips in frustration. Her graceful face is warping, looking like she's about to cry before my eyes. Her delicate body begins to tremble.

I sympathize for her a bit.

Rather, I can see her white nape now she's looking down. Sexy.

I inadvertently talk with a joking tone.

"Did you steal from a farm or something? You look gluttonous after all."

"I did no such a thing! --I, I'm...."

The female knight faltered.

Judging from the way she doesn't want to say it. Looks like she doesn't want to admit it.

However, the female knight lifts her head and looks straight at me with her blue eyes.

"...I have not done anything wrong. I was only born as a 『Sinner』."

"Sinner?"

"Yes, they're said to be an evil existence from the moment they're born. Most of this world has fallen to demon king's hand, and the reason why the true hero who should have saved this world is never born is because of the sinful 『Sinners』 --or so it's said."

"Hmmm"

I tilted my head.

This woman seems to be strong-willed but she doesn't seem like a bad person.

Or rather, she looks like the pure righteous type.

I squint and peer carefully inside the woman.

The all-seeing eyes.

-- 《Truth Sight》。

The female knight's status shows up in front of me.

【Status】

Name: Celica Rem Edelstein

Gender: Female

Age: 17 years old

Race: Human

Job: Sinner (=====)

Class: Knight Lv 5=====Lv 17

Element: 【Light】

【Parameters】

Strength: 10 (1) Growth Limit 25

Agility: 17 (3) Growth Limit 30

Magic: 19 (4) Growth Limit 75

Wisdom: 12 (2) Growth Limit 50

Luck: 02 (0) Growth Limit 03

Vitality: 135

Willpower: 155

Attack: 107 (37+70)

Defense: 089 (44+40+5)

Magic Attack: 165 (50+50+50+15)

Magic Defense: 158 (43+50+50+15)

【Equipment】

Weapon: Mithril Rapier Attack +70 Magic +50

Protector: Mithril Half Plate Defense +40 Magic +50

Grace Dress Defense +5 Magic +15

Accessories: Ring of Succession Pendant of Memories

I omitted her skill tree since it was not really developed.

Why do other people's abilities are shown like in a game?

Why--cause I'm a God.

They looked a bit different in the past, but after playing various games, this kind is easier to understand! After noticing that, I modified Truth Sight.

Well, anyway.

Putting aside her abilities which demand retorting at some places (For example the (1) beside the Strength parameter is its growth at level up. Hers only increases by 1 at each level up on top of having 25 for its growth limit, she's obviously more suited to be a magician.)

For now I'm focusing on her element.

Light elemental.

I muttered with folded arms, not understanding it.

"Where's the evil you've got from being born? Don't you have the rare Light element." I don't know how it is in this world, but in Japan it was a rare existence with only one existing among one thousand to one hundred thousands people.

Have you ever experienced something like these.

When a quarrel was about to break out during a neighborhood meeting, the moment a cheerful neighbor aunty came, the mood in the meeting room suddenly became bright and the quarrel slackened.

You were irritated because of a very unpleasant thing in school, but then you got healed just by seeing a certain cheerful clerk for some reason.

You might not have experienced it since they're very rare, but they're people who can make the surroundings cheerful just by being there. Such an existence has Light element.

And this woman also has Light element.

Even though it's not impossible, I would've never thought that she could be a sinner who brings harm to the world.

The female knight shakes her hanging head. Her blond hair feebly sways.

"No way.... For me to be Light, that's impossible.... I've always been unlucky since I was born."

"Ah, yep. You do seem unlucky."

Your luck is only 2 after all, I couldn't exactly say that.

The female knight sighed a deep sigh. It was a tired sigh like she had abandoned all hopes.

"So it was really my fault for being born a Sinner. --Traveler. Would you please hear my sole request?"

"I can listen at least."

Every God hears wish. However, whether it's fulfilled or not is up to the God's will.

However, the female knight's request was an unexpected one.

"Please--kill me."

"Eh!"

I was at a loss for words at the sudden request.

CHAPTER 2

I WILL GRANT YOUR WISH!

There's an open space as large as a gymnasium inside the lush thick forest.

A female knight is chained on the rock beside a clean spring located in the corner of that space.

She asked me who is a God a request.

"Please--kill me."

"Eh!"

At the surprised me, the female knight spun her words falteringly.

"I wanted to become hero in order to defeat the demon king. I did my very best while hiding my identity. ...However, In the end, I'm still a Sinner. It was an impossible dream."

"But, aren't you being offered to the God? It'd be bad if you die on your own."

She shook her head at my question. Her rich blond hair sorrowfully swayed.

"You're mistaken. For a Sinner to be useful for people, they are to become a bait for the demon king and his subordinates at the end."

"What'd you say--!"

I look at the offerings with <<Truth Sight>>.

Mixed among the 【Specialty Liquor】 and 【Specialty Fruits】 are 【Monster Food】 and 【Offering for Demon King】.

She's not a sacrifice for God!

Moreover--I was astounded at the flawlessness of this system.

Light elemental people who have the power to repel evil are treated as Sinners, and become bait for monsters.

Isn't this the truth why the true hero is never born?

The female knight speaks while touching the collar with her slender fingers.

"I tried to remove these chains, but I wasn't able to. It must be impossible for you too. Therefore, please hear my last request. Before I become a plaything of the monsters-- please kill me."

Female knight lowers her head after saying that. Her blond hair bathed in sunlight beautifully sways.

I gnaw my teeth and glare down below.

"Are you fine with that?"

"Eh?"

"Either by monsters, or me, dying here? Is that really what you wish?"

"My wish... is it. --Everything is already over. There's no time. Quickly kill me and run away yourself."

"That's not what I ask you. What does your heart wish. Do you want to die here?!"

"I--My wish is--"

At that time.

A huge man twice taller than me who's 175cm appeared with sounds of breaking branches. His whole body is covered by rock-like skin, his legs and arms are thicker than my body.

He's holding a hammer as big as a car in his hand.

He looks like the so-called rock giant.

The rock giant smiles vulgarly when he sees the female knight.

"Gehehe.... Ain't ya a fine woman looking good to torment with. I'll make ya full of hole in yer' nether region without yer' limbs gehehe."

The female knight shouts with a sad look on her face.

"Aaa! Please run away traveler!"

"Like I said, forget about me. Say your wish!"

However, the female knight pushed me with tears on her eyes.

"Please! You alone must live! Please live until the day hero-sama appears and defeats demon king comes, please!"

"That day ain't gonna come! Gyahaha!"

The rock giant laughed out loud to make fun of her, and then he walks step by step in the open space.

And then he arrived beside us.

He really looks a filthy rock giant up close, looking down on me.

"Nn~? The heck are ya? What are ya doing here? You a sacrifice too?"

"Sorry. I'm talking with this woman right now. ...You wait a bit."

I glanced a bit and then turned back at the female knight.

The female knight is shaking her head like child. Her tears are scattered around.

"Run away! Go while I'm being assaulted--"

"You really are...."

I felt an admiration out of surprise and astonishment.

--Even now when she's about to be killed, she thinks of other people more than herself eh....

It's not only because she's born with Light element, I understand that she's really a

kind girl at heart.

And then the rock giant shouted angrily enough to shake the forest. Several surprised small birds fly away to the blue sky.

"Ya bastard! I don't know who the shit are ya, no one ignore this Greyhades-sama, one of demon king's four devaaaaas!! Die!"

The rock giant raises his giant hammer.

With just that, the hammer blocks the sunlight.

"Aaa, run--!"

The female knight pushed me away with her slender arms. She closes her eyes while desperately trying to cover me. Heartrending tears flow below her long eyelashes, streaming down on her white cheek--.

Kaboom!

A strong shock from the hammer.

The soil on the ground whirled up from the wind pressure, the offering liquor bottles fell down.

A sudden silence.

The female knight who tightly closed her eyes timidly open them--and then her blue eyes open wide in surprise.

The rock giant's whole body is shaking with the muscles on his arms swelling while his slit eyes are wide open in surprise. It's clear that he's giving it all.

"W-whaaaat!?"

I've firmly stopped his useless effort.

--With a finger.

While glaring at him from below, I speak with a low raging voice.

"...Wait a bit--Didn't I tell you that?"

Sharp glint in eyes like they're glittering. God's coercion.

"Hi....!"

The rock giant jumped back at once. He retreated to the edge of the open space, he's probably too afraid.

I turn back at the female knight and speak with a gentle voice.

"Now, say it. Your true wish. I will grant you anything now."

The female knight was surprised but her face collapsed back to a graceful one hearing me.

"Ueee....Pl...se. Sa...ve...."

"What! I can't hear you! Repeat that!"

Right at that time, the rock giant who escaped to the end of the open space began to run in anger.

"U-using some strange techniqueeee! I won't forgive ya!!"

He's coming while raising cloud of dust.

The female knight speaks again.

"Sa...v. Still, I...ve."

"Louder!"

After I yelled her, the female knight bends her body and shouts out loud with all her might while tearing up!

"Please, save me! I still want to live more! Uwaaan!"

The female knight cries with a crumpled face.

"Well said. Lemme have the offering."

Saying that, I scoop the tears collected under her eyes.

And then I relax my face and smile.

While drawing out the Tachi on my right waist, I declare loudly.

"Thy wish has been granted! My name is Keika Hiko-no-Mikoto! I will definitely grant your wish!"

I smear the collected tears on the Tachi.

The blade crest shines blue!

The coming rock giant raises his giant hammer.

"Petty trick! Yer' too late to do anything--<<Impact Death Press>>!"

The swinging hammer comes down with a swoosh.

Its swinging speed makes the handle looks like it's bent like a bow--.

I casually hold my Tachi while standing still.

"Abiding by the name Keika Hiko-no-Mikoto, o small streamlet flowing since the age of gods, gather to form a raging torrent--<<Water Demon Slashing Destroyer>>!"

--Giii, zwuaan!!

A dull and thick sound filled the open space.

I casually swung down my Tachi.

The rock giant freezes while still in a position where he's swinging his hammer downward.

Light in his dirty eyes rapidly disappears.

"W-why... how...."

Something small fell to the ground. Like gray caterpillars.

Those are the the rock giant's fingers.

Thud.

The hammer fell and made a big sound.

With the shock of the fall, the hammer's body and handle broke in two.

And then.

Fwooshhh----!

A straight line of blood was sprayed behind the rock giant.

He's split in two from his head to the nether region and falls.

Zwun....

After the heaviest thud, the rock giant fell and died.

I swing my Tachi to brush the blood away.

"Too weak to even talk about."

And then I come near the female knight who's sitting listlessly.

A flash.

With a high-pitched sound, her collar and chains are smashed. Scattering around the female knight.

I slowly put my Tachi back into its sheathe.

The female knight seems strange even though I've removed her binding. She doesn't

move while looking dumbfounded with her blue eyes.

"Are you alright?"

I get closer to the female knight whose red lips cutely opening.

And then she suddenly grab my clothes.

Pulling me.

The female knight beings to weep while hugging my abdomen.

"Ro...sama....he....sama."

"W-what!?"

"Hero-sama, Hero-samaaaaaa! --I've been waiting for you, Hero-samaa!!"

She started to cry as if she had caught fire. While pushing her face on my stomach, she's crying like a child.

"O-oy--"

I tried to pull her apart and let her stand, but she refused and continued to cry while shaking her head like a child.

Crying while saying, hero-sama, hero-sama.

She keeps crying no matter how many time I try to tear her apart.

I look up at the sky and let out a sigh.

I continue to pat her fascinating blond hair while letting her weep for a while.

CHAPTER 3

I WILL BECOME A GOD IN THIS NEW WORLD!

Warm sunlight is hitting us from above.

At the nook of the forest's open space, the blond female knight--Celica finally calmed down.

Yet her blue eyes are still filled with tears and her slender fingers are grasping my Wafuku tightly.

Doesn't seem like she'll let go of it.

The girl cries with a spoiled voice and upturned eyes.

"Sob. ...herosamaa"

Stumped, I sighed.

I should tell her now that she's calmed down.

"Ah, sorry. I, er, I don't plan to become a hero."

"E...! But why! Even though you're so strong!"

"No, that's probably because he was just too weak.... Thus I've already granted your wish. I will be returning now."

"What are you saying! That monster was one of the demon king's four devas who ruled the area around here! Ordinary men can't even hope to touch him!"

"You kidding me. Unbelievable."

I look at the body of the fallen rock giant in the open space with <<Truth Sight>>.
His Status appears.

【Status】

Name: Greyhades

Gender: Man

Age: 283

Race: Rock Demon

Job: Supreme Commander of the Demon King's Eastern Army

Class: Great Warrior Lv 99 Commander Lv 3

Element: 【Darkness】

【Parameters】

Strength: 900 Growth Limit 999

Agility: 850 Growth Limit 999

Magic: 288 Growth Limit 800

Wisdom: 014 Growth Limit 200

Luck: 040 Growth Limit 100

Vitality: 8750

Willpower: 1510

Attack: 5300

Defense: 3450

Magic Attack: 0576

Magic Defense: 0028

【Skills】

Swing Down: Simple big damage

Fissure: Simple damage + Ranged bind

Storm Down: Ranged attack

Blast Wave: Ranged fire damage

Impact Death Press: Ranged instant death attack

Mighty Guard: Null physical and magic attacks

Knock Down: Drop the opponent's weapon

Weapon Destruction: Break any weapon at a probability

His equipment are missing since he's dead.

But still, this guy is that huh, the type that specializes in attack and defense.

His magic defense is only 28, normally you'd defeat him with magic attacks.

--Weak.

Something like this could become an executive huh.

Well, he was indeed way stronger than humans though.

However, looking at the skill explanations, it seems 【Mighty Guard】 could defend against any physical and magical attack in exchange of not being able to attack himself, and the 【Weapon Destruction】 can seemingly destroy any weapon of the opponent at a probability.

It could have been a bit dangerous if he used these two. A bit.

Well, that's why you provoke your opponent to prevent them from using troublesome tactics like that.

Either way, it's my victory.

Besides, it doesn't change the fact that he's weak.

Because--I look at my own palm.

My Status appears.

【Status】

Name: Keika Hiko-no-Mikoto

Gender: Male

Age: ?

Race: All Gods

Job: God

Class: Master Swordsman God Monk

Element: 【Noble Wind】 【Clear Stream】 【Faint Gleam】

【Parameters】

Strength: 51000(+1000)

Agility: 71700(+1700)

Magic: 91900(+1900)
Wisdom: 21200(+1200)
Believers: 1

Vitality: 613500
Willpower: 565500

Attack: 102000
Defense: 143400
Magic Attack: 183800
Magic Defense: 42400

【Equipment】

Weapon: Tachi of God's Majesty Attack x2 Magic Attack x2
Protector: Deep Blue Line Clothes of God Defense x2 Magic Defense x2
Sacred Tree Geta Agility x2 during actions, The strap can't be cut, Cannot be unequipped unwillingly
Accessories: Gourd of Water Guardian can hold a lot of water, won't rot

The difference is literally orders of magnitudes.

That's why I could win easily.

These are the minimum standards of a God though.

As you can see Gods have no level. Only believers.

The ability values of each believer is added to the God's.

--Oh.

Looks like Celica is a virgin after all. When a chaste woman with **【Light Element】** becomes my believer, that woman's ability value multiplied by 100 is added to mine. A virgin woman who isn't of light elemental adds 100. Any other case adds 10. That's why bad gods often ask for virgin women to be sacrificed.

By the way, that guy, Amaterasu's total ability values exceed 100 millions.

Jesus's and Buddha's are more than a billion.

I'm like a fly before them.

I look at Celica and say.

"He really was weak. It was not impossible for you guys to win against him. The other demon king's forces are probably like that too.... Well, good luck. I'm going home."

"B-but.... Then what do you want to be instead of hero!?"

"What huh--right.... I want to become a God."

I said that as a joke.

--I can't become one anymore after all.

Yet Celica cutely tilted her head and smiled afterward, saying "ah".

"God? You must be talking about God of Valor!"

"God of Valor?"

"Am I mistaken? People who piled up great many achievements as heroes are revered as Gods after their death aren't they."

"Eh!"

I screamed in surprise. I couldn't help to.

You can become a God if you work hard as a hero--!?

"F-for examples, what kind of guys--Gods of Valor are there?"

"Um let me see.... Hero Lazan who defeated many sea monsters led by Meteor Whale that was called demon king of the sea, and reclaimed the sea back to humans. He's revered as the protector god of the sea even now. There's also Hero Jared who used tactics to fight and overcome demon king's army many times, now he's revered as God of Battle. Others are...."

Celica said another five heroes.

My cheeks loosened every time I heard one.

I mean.

Everything they did are something I can do.

Becoming a God just by defeating such weak monsters like that one, easy peasy.

100 times easier than working hard in Japan. Difficulty easy.

Moreover, working hard as a hero shouldn't be against the rule created by the Gods of this world.

Well, I probably should visit and ask them once at least.

Just to tell them about my situation of wanting to become a hero.

I bite my teeth and decide it.

--I've gone and come to an easy mode world!

I will become a God loved by the people of this world!!

Celica's eyes are brightened by the various heroes' exploits.

Her beautiful voice is reverberating in the quiet open space.

I put my hand on her shoulder. Twitch, her tension is transmitted to my hand.

I smile like a fraud.

"Celica. That was a joke. --I will become a hero."

"Re-really! Thank you very much! As expected of Hero-sama desuwa."

Celica hugs me tightly. Her arms and legs are soft and delicate but her silver breastplate are quite painful.

I pat her head while smiling wryly.

"You're unexpectedly bold."

"T-that's not true.... It's because it's Hero-sama."

Celica separates herself, blushing while looking down.

I put a serious face.

"However I have one condition."

"W-what would that be?"

"Protect your chasteness forever for my sake."

"Eh!?"

I put my fingers on Celica's slender chin and lift it up.

"Can you do it?"

Celica's face to ears are reddened, her blue eyes are moist.

"....Yes. Hero-sama. I will dedicate this body to you."

"That's the spirit."

I separate my hand, Celica's muttered, "hau", with a sad voice.

I speak with folded arms.

"Still, I'd like you to stop with Hero-sama. Right then, Celica. Just call me Keika."

"I understand Keika-sama... wait, have I introduced myself?"

"A! ...yeah, you said your name."

"Was that the case. Then allow me to introduce myself once again. My name is Celica.... desu. Knight desu. I'm born in the west desu.... that is all desu."

She's speaking like there's something stuck between her teeth.

Some strange birds flew above the open space while making giegie sounds like they were making fun of her.

I glare at Celica whose eyes are half open.

"Ah, so that's how it is. In the end you're hiding something after all the hero-sama, hero-sama flattery."

"Uh.... I'm sorry Keika-sama. There's, um some circumstances about my family."

"Well, I vaguely understand. You're a noble right?"

"H-how did!"

"Well, I can infer that much from your equipment and such. You purposely made your strong equipment look weak."

"As expected of Keika-sama."

Celica's voice is full of respect.

However, I groan, u~n.

Actually it's just because I saw her Status directly.

Her knight level is 5, but there's an unknown Job and Class at level 17. Her age is also 17. In other words, it's a Class that automatically levels up with age.

It would be strange if that Job was not something one has since they were born, like prince and princess.

--Moreover, it's five characters. She's probably a 『Princess』 .

I smile at the hesitating Celica.

"Well, looks like there's a lot surrounding you, it'd be a long story. Leaving that aside, I have to become a hero."

"Yes, Keika-sama... I will definitely talk about it before long."

"I know. And, I came from afar just recently so I still don't know the system in this country, what should I do for that?"

"In order to become a hero you have to take the Hero's Exam to get authorization from King Daphnes and the Hero Medal."

"I see. There's no point in claiming yourself one huh. Well guess that makes sense. A hero can become a god after all. --Where do you take that exam?"

"You have to take it in the royal capital of Daphnes Kingdom, Chloe."

"Alright. Let's go to the royal capital first."

"Yes. Allow me to guide you."

Celica walks ahead. Her waist-long blond hair greatly sways.

However, I call toward her dignified back.

"Wait a minute. Are we going to walk in this forest?"

"Yes? That's right--ah! Should we bring the head of the four deva?"

She puts her hands on her cheeks and casually tilts her head. That kind of gesture is surprisingly cute.

Putting that aside.

I ponder for a bit.

We will be welcomed warmly if I bring the four deva's head, no mistake.

However, the kind of 『Sinner』 system has even been incorporated nationwide.

There's no doubt that this Demon King is cunning beyond imagination.

I would attract the demon king's attention if I carelessly stood out.

Using backhanded tactics, they would drop me out of the Hero's Exam.... I can't deny such a possibility.

Or the Demon King might even come to personally dispose of me--that's also possible.

I can probably defeat him easily if that happens.

--However.

Would the people revere me if I just defeat the demon king?

Thinking back from Celica's story earlier, the heroes had to overcome hardship after hardship, and repeatedly saved many people from troubles before ultimately gaining their trust.

Humans forget things easily.

They can forget the favor they received in three years.

In order to prevent that, you have to create obligations of gratitude many many times.

That was the biggest reason of my failure in Japan.

I didn't untiringly sell my name.

Rome was not built in a day.

I should avoid the same mistake!

I shake my head.

"Let's not bring the head. They'll just doubt us needlessly since I'm not known as a hero yet."

"I-is that right.... If that's Keika-sama's wish."

"I also have another reason to stop you."

"What would that be?"

"This forest is vast y'know. It's possible that we can't get ahold of food along the way, so let's bring the things here. He's dead anyway."

And then Celica's face brightens.

"That's true! It completely slipped my mind! I thought that food would be a matter of course.... No, please forget that. Then, let us take them."

She said it like she was a princess who never knew hardships, but I pretended to not notice it.

And so we choose food.

Expensive food and food that seem to last long. It was easy with <<Truth Sight>>.

I've also filled the gourd full of water.

I can actually just fly with magic, but I want to be seen just as a strong human right now.

And also, I want her to teach me about this world.

Talking about that while leisurely walking is just right.

We use the offering cloth as a bag to hold several days worth of food.

"Are you ready?"

"Yes, Keika-sama."

Celica answered me with a completely trusting beaming smile.

Even while drawing back by that straight honest heart, I walk in the deep forest while having a pleasant chat with Celica.

CHAPTER 4

VILLAGERS' WELCOME

Dusk. The western sky turns red.

After sleeping outdoors several times inside the forest, we finally came out of the vast forest.

She told me many things during the walk.

This world, the geography of each nations, history and the pantheon. And the menace of the demon king and the hero system.

Right now we're heading south where the royal capital is located.

However, I felt the extent of the demon king's influence as I listened to her story.

It seems no true hero has appeared for 100 years.

There were some strong heroes, but every one of them were killed by the demon king instead.

I can't help but think it's strange.

There might be a reason why the demon king can't be defeated.

Looks like I need to delve it in detail.

The two of us are walking on a path of a plain with swaying grass.

Celica walks by my side with a smile on her whole face without looking tired.

Her gentle white cheeks are dyed red from the light of the sunset.

"You're really lively."

"Yes. I'm happy just being able to walk with Hero-sama like this."

Celica puts her hands on her cheeks and twists her body. Emphasizing her delicate limbs.

I shake my head in astonishment.

We arrived at a small village when the day was about to fall.

It's a village with around 50 people scattered here and there.

Celica broods it over.

"Let's take a lodge in this village today."

"Yeah, let's.... However, is it safe?"

I implicitly included the fact about her Sinner status.

Celica speaks while grasping the pendant hanging on her neck.

"We should be fine, it's a small village. --Furthermore, I can't let Keika-sama camp outside anymore than this."

"I don't really mind.... And it looks like there's no inn here."

"Generally, you ask the village mayor to let us stay in his house in cases like this."

"I see."

"We might have to sleep in the shed however...."

"No problem, as long as it keep us from the weather."

"Yes, I understand."

Celica steps toward the biggest house in the center of the village tensely.

I followed after her leisurely.

The village mayor's house was an unexpectedly big two-storied building. He might be working doubly as a governmental official.

We met the village mayor in the dining room of that mansion.

He was a very kind old man with white hair and gray beard.

He warmly welcomes us with a smile on his whole face.

"Well well, welcome to our humble village, travelers. Now now, we're having a dinner now. Please have your fill to your heart's content."

"We're very sorry for the sudden visit."

Celica gracefully bowed. Her blond hair hung gently.

I also say my greeting.

"Thank you for letting us stay. Is it really alright for us to even be treated to dinner."

"No worries. Your appearances suggest that you're adventurers. We're thankful enough that you exterminate monsters."

The village mayor laughs with furrowed eyebrows.

However, he can't deceive God's eyes.

I knew that his heart wasn't laughing.

"Now now, please. They're nothing much but please eat up before they turn cold."

The village mayor encouraged us to eat.

There are some crude breads and soup with piece of cut meat inside the bowl put on the wooden table. Appetizing steam rises.

Celica squints her eyes in delight, it's been awhile since our last warm meal.

I ask about the portrait of a woman hung on the wall.

"Who is that?"

"Ah, that's the portrait of Saintess-sama who saved this village from a curse a long time ago--"

"--<<Detoxification>>."

I invoked a spell while the village mayor's eyes were diverted.

The soup shines for an instant. Mine only.

With Celica's character, she probably can't pretend like she's being deceived, so I've decided not to tell her.

Well, even without detoxification, I should be fine even if I ingest the poison since I'm

a God, but I don't know the rule of this world, it's an insurance.

Then the meal began.

I eat while soaking the dried bread in the soup.

The taste was simple, but the meat's flavor and the fat weren't bad. It's similar to pot-au-feu with few ingredients.

Looking at the side, Celica is tearing the bread with her beautiful finger before putting it on the soup. Her slender throat is moving up and down.

Her behaviors are that of someone who doesn't suspect anything at all.

Noticing my sight, Celica tilts her head in puzzlement.

"Is there anything wrong?"

"No, nothing."

I resumed eating the soup and bread once again.



Night.

We were led to a room with no window deep in the mansion. There's one bed and a sheet made from bundles of straw.

The oiled door is the only thing looking new.

"I'll be sleeping in the straw."

"But. Keika-sama, please use the bed."

"No, I shouldn't fall asleep you see. So it's just right."

"Eh?"

"And also, gather up the baggage so we can leave immediately."

"I understand."

Celica looked at me wonderingly, but she obeyed without question.

After that, I asked someone in the house for some water. Celica wiped her body in the

room, but I told her that I wanted to wash my whole body.

I draw water in the courtyard, wiping my limbs.

From top to bottom. Water drip from my simple black hair. The coldness wakes my eyes.

Many stars are scattered about in the sky, beautiful.

However, I can't see the bright moon. It's disappointing, but also convenient.

However, I wasn't just bathing.

I memorized the layout of the mansion while going back to my room.

And then I slept.

Midnight.

In a pitch black room with no light.

When I felt some presences I opened my eyes while still leaning on the straw.

I can hear the deep slumber of Celica.

I concentrate my mind.

Sounds of tiptoes in the corridor and the garden. However, they can't erase the faint vibration.

It seems they're talking but I can't hear them.

"--<<Multi Attentive Ears>>"

The surrounding sounds flow into my ears.

Voices of men.

"Did they fall asleep?"

"They did."

"Is she really a Sinner?"

"The crystal ball shined red. There is no mistake."

This was a hoarse voice of an old man.

A middle aged man asks.

"Won't they get up?"

"It was a sleeping drug for monster. They'll be fast asleep until tomorrow morning."

This was the voice of an old man again, mixed with laughter.

An old man's voice.

"Alright. Someone go to the city and call the guard--"

"Now now wait. Our achievement will be robbed if we call the guard."

"However, they looked like strong adventurers."

"They're sleeping right?"

"That's right but...."

"We'll arrest them and bring them to the guard ourselves."

There's only five men in the corridor. Including the village mayor.

Around 10 men in front of the mansion. There are sounds of armor and metals from this direction. Looks like they're armed.

However, judging from their conversations, I had guessed it wrong.

I thought this was a village where the people kill vagabonds and steal their belongings, but that doesn't seem to be the case.

One of the men chuckled while I was in doubt.

"That babe is a 『Sinner』 . She's worth 10 big gold coins. Might even be one pure gold coin...."

"Righto."

A man who's strangely breathing roughly asks.

"He-hey.... Before we take her to the guards, er, we can...."

The village mayor scolds them in low voice.

"Fools, if even one of you have anything to do with a Sinner, your whole family will be slaughtered. The village will be cursed too. Did you forget the terror of that epidemic! You must not put your hand on her."

"Tch, I know I know."

I clicked my tongue inwardly.

--They were aiming for Celica huh.

Celica said that it was alright, but it seems the village has an item that can perceive a Sinner.

By the way, it seems judging if someone is a Sinner does not happen frequently, it's only done when a baby is born or when an outsider comes or when you're studying to be a priest.

We were found out because we were outsiders this time.

Still, they're not letting people to get their hand on one even though the Sinner will be killed.

They're probably afraid that a child might be born.

A light elemental girl has a high chance of giving birth to a child with even bigger light after all.

That means, all girls with Light element are all chaste huh.

I'll prioritize helping them once I become a hero.

--Oh.

Someone is touching the door. And then opening it without a sound.
Four young men enter first before the village mayor.
Two to the bed, two to my direction. Tiptoeing with ropes in their hands.

The moment they entered the right distance, I jumped!
Thud, thud, two dull sounds.

"U"
"A"
My right hand hit the two's abdomens. They couldn't breathe when I hit their diaphragms.
I jumped over the collapsing two.
I hit the two who were going to tie Celica, robbing them of their consciousness.

The village mayor was going to shout in surprise.
"W-wha--gwu"

My hand was faster.
I wrap the rope that was going to be used to tie Celica on the village mayor's neck.
"U, ga"
The village mayor is desperately trying to take off the whip-like coiling rope with his fingers.

I move like a wind and strike the village mayor's abdomen.
"Gu...."
He falls down. I untie the rope on his neck immediately.
I check his clothes and snatch a key.
And then I tie their mouths and arms with the rope they brought themselves.

After that I take our baggage and lift Celica who's sleeping like a blond princess--

"It's a bit hard to move."

Her head would likely hit the wall or door if I carry her with bridal carry.

I put her on my back instead. I felt soft round sensations on my back. They really are big.

"Unya, munya.... Grandma, nandesuno...."

How much of a princess this girl is.

I left the room while feeling her cute sleep breathing.

I close the door quietly from outside.

I go to the back since there's 10 armed men in the courtyard. I've checked that there's an unused door there.

Since I've memorized the layout, I can walk without being lost even with no light.

Walking with bare feet.

I was never going to fight. I fully intend to escape.

Of course I can instantly end it, mere villagers they are, if I want to.

However, since they're armed I might make a mistake at holding back and some of them might die. They're probably going to use magic too, all the more dangerous.

--If I was still the same as the me in Japan, I probably would have flood the whole village with mud in anger.

While saying it was a blasphemy against God.

However, that's not good. I won't be able to become a God if I repeat the same thing.

Becoming a hero is my first priority now.

If I'm burdened with the stigma of murder, I will lose the qualification to become a hero.

It will ruin this easy live toward divinity.

Do it gently. Don't get angry, me.

--Well I'll ask for the payback in full once I've become a hero though!

I walk while suppressing my footsteps and concentrating my ears.

Presences inside the house. Suppressed breathing of people.

Children and women are holding their breath in their own room.

There's no obstacle in the route.

However, it's only a matter of time before they realize.

I've to hurry.

I arrived at the back door. Dust and junks are piled up in front of the door.

I open the door with the key I snatched from the village mayor.

Putting some strength, I quietly push it--.

SCHREEECH--!

An awfully loud sound resounded in the darkness of the night.

--Darn!

It must have rusted since it was never used!

The air in the mansion completely changes. Rustling sounds are resounding.

"Did you hear a sound?"

"From the back."

"Someone go see it."

About five footsteps went toward the back.

"Eeey, damn!"

I went outside while cursing.

To the opposite of the footsteps.

I run through a narrow path.

Celica is swaying on my back. Her blond hair is tickling my neck.

I'll use God's Power to raise my speed once I arrive at a place outside the villagers' eyes.

Because they'll think I'm a monster if they see me using God power.

However, I heard shouting from behind.

"They ran away!"

"Over there!"

I saw several villagers chasing us when I looked back.

--Damn, they found us already!

With this I can't use God power until I shake off the villagers.

I had no choice but to run away while carrying Celica on my back.

I leave the village and run in a gentle plain.

To the south where the royal capital is.

CHAPTER 5

CHANGE OF DETERMINATION!

Under a night sky adorned with unfamiliar stars.

I ran in a path toward the south plain.

In order to escape the villagers' chase while aiming for the royal capital.

I might be able to escape safely at this rate.

At worst, I can just use a magic to quicken my legs.

However, I can't deny the possibility of being treated like a monster instead of a person.

I won't be able to become a hero if that happens.

I run in the plain. We're already quite far from the village.

I thought the villagers wouldn't know where I was going since there was no moon, but they're going straight to where we are.

The man in the lead is riding an animal. I thought it was a horse, but it's more like a pig with long legs, accurately speaking.

That animal is chasing while sniffing around.

They're getting closer fast.

--What a troublesome creature. It's fast too, an average person can't hope to outrun it.

Although there are two pig horses now, the villagers who were chasing us on foot fell out due to exhaustion one after another.

Ooh, this situation is convenient.

I've decided.

--Alright, I'll beat the guys riding on the pig horses.

Then we'll reach the royal capital comfortably on the pig horses and return them back to the village with magic.

I've gotten tired of running too, this is just right.

My heart became lighter when I decided that.

I run in the plain toward the south aiming for the royal capital.

The villagers who are riding on the pig horses are chasing us.

They were screaming, "Stop!", "Don't run!", sometimes, but I ignored it.

When about 30 minutes have passed.

Only pig horses are chasing us now. They're only several hundred meters behind.

--It should be alright now.

I stopped and put down the baggage.

I crouch down and lay Celica on the ground.

Then I stand up with my Geta. <TLN: A type of Japanese clogs.>

And then I walk toward the coming pig horses.

My Wafuku is fluttering, my Geta rattle. <TLN: Traditional Japanese clothing.>

I can clearly see the villagers riding on the pig horses since they've come dozens of meter away in front of me.

They only have ropes and knives, I don't see any sword nor armor.

--Lucky.

I don't have to use my Tachi. <TLN: A type of Japanese sword.>

I clench my fists and snap my fingers.

The villagers are shouting while approaching.

"You damn Sinner, prepare yourself!"

"You can't run anymore! --Uwaa!"

One of the villagers suddenly flew in the air. He falls headlong and stops moving.

Next, the two pig horses fell on the ground successively.

The other villager got thrown out to the ground.

I reflexively shout.

"What!?"

I stare hard. Something black is moving in the dark.... An earthworm?

The villager who can't get up screams while inching back on his rear.

"I-It's a Ghoul Wooorm!"

The earthworm raised its head high. Its circumference is about as big as a tanker. It seems to be around 30 meter long. The round mouth at the tip of its head have sharp knife-like teeth lined up.

I squint and glare. --<<Truth Sight>>.

【Status】

Name: Ghoul Worm

Element: 【Earth】 【Darkness】

Attack: 0300

Defense: 0400

Vitality: 3000

Self-Regeneration: 1000

【Skills】

Swallow: Swallow an enemy whole

Pulverize: Hide and pulverize rock and armor

Bend Over: Crush with body. Ranged attack.

It's not only strong, it can even recover itself on top of being sturdy.

Quite troublesome.

--Well, it's like konjac before me though.

I draw the Tachi on my waist while running.

The Ghoul Worm thrusts its head at the fallen villager. 【Swallow】 huh!

"Uwaaaa!"

The villager is at his wits' end, his eyes are closed.

"Deyaaa!"

I swung my Tachi diagonally.

One slash--!

Zwan!

The cut Ghoul Worm's head flies.

The Ghoul Worm's head flew to the other side from the impact, its body was blown backward.

The villager opens his eyes in surprise.

"W-what're you doing, that can't defeat it!"

"What!?"

When I turned around, the Ghoul Worm's body had just risen. Bubbling black meat cover the wound, swelling up.

Its head regenerated in a blink of an eye.

Furthermore, the cut head which flew to the other side regenerated its own body.

Tremendous regenerative power. It was not recovery huh.

Moreover, I don't feel magic power. It seems to be its normal regenerative power as a creature. Impossible.

"This isn't at the level of regeneration anymore.... How do other people defeat it?"

"Fire, with fire! You've to burn it with fire magic!"

"I see."

I hold my Tachi at the same level of my eyes'.

The villager shout out when he sees that.

"What're you doing! You can't kill it with sword--"

"Shut up for a bit... Fleeting phosphoresce abiding my name, become the long wave which recompose everything it slips through!

--<<Photon Conversion>>."

Violet light covers the Tachi.

After showing off its sharp teeth at me, the Ghoul Worm is coming.

"KISHAAAAAAA!"

"This guy barked before going."

"SHAAAA!"

The Ghoul Worm thrust its head while exhaling greatly.

"Hmph!"

I brandished my Tachi. While leaving faint light, the Ghoul Worm was sliced in two from its head to body. Violet phosphoresce scattered in the surroundings.

The villager who was watching behind is peeved.

"Sword is useless.... You've to burn it with more heat. Look."

The said Ghoul Worm trembles right after. Its meat bubbles, closing the wound--it rises again.

The villager stares in wonder.

"W-what!?"

Its meat swells with eerie bubbling sounds. It swells to be like a mountain, and its body that was normal is turning into a lump of meat.

"kisheeee...."

The Ghoul Worm twists its body.

Its obviously huge meat head bulged, and then it stopped moving.

The mountain of lump of black meat in the plain is disappearing while letting out mist like it's evaporating.

The villager asks while trembling.

"Y-you. What did you do...?"

"What. It's tumor. Its self-regeneration power was too high, so I just chipped its gene a little."

"Tu-tumor?"

"Well, it's like an endless regeneration of flesh, turning even brain and nerves into meat, can you understand that?"

To be more exact, I just bathed it in ultraviolet light. It's not effective against normal creature, but it was the correct answer against such regenerative power.

"....I don't really understand, but yer' awesome!--a!"

The villager shifted his attention to the opposite side. The Ghoul Worm which regenerated from its head had begun to move.

Crawling on the ground.

"Guess I'd better take care of that one too."

I briskly approached it and killed it like the other one.

Then I came back to the villager who had pulled himself together. The other villager is still unconscious.

"Now then. I've saved your life. Understand?"

"Y-yea."

"Of course you also understand my strength right?"

"O-of course."

The villager is rubbing his hands while laughing flippantly.

--Uwaa. This guy definitely cannot be trusted.

He'd probably go back and chattered everything that would be disadvantageous for me.

Yet, I would have to kill him if he couldn't go back.

A murderer can't become a hero.

The night deepens, the grass in the plain are swaying.

Haa, I sighed and picked a twig on the ground.

Then I uproot a grass with sturdy looking stalk.

I quietly chant a spell on that stalk.

"Gentle breeze abiding my name seal the cutting blade here--<<Gale Wind Blade>>"

Then I tied the twig with the stalk.

I push it before the villager.

"Try taking off the grass on this twig."

"Hee.... Uwah!"

A gale was produced the moment he untied the grass, and then the twig got cut.

I pull another grass.

With a friendly grin on my face, I take the villager's arm.

The villager who was dumbfounded had a cramp on his face.

"O-oy, don't tell me!"

During the moment he was trying to run, I tied the grass's stalk on the man's wrist.

The villager's face warps like he's about to cry.

"Uwaaaaa! What have you done!"

I put my hands on the man's shoulders and persuade him.

"The moment it's cut, untied, and you say something disadvantageous for me, it will tear. That's it."

"Wha-what do you want me to dooo.....!"

"You don't need to do anything. You can just go back. But tell the village mayor this,

"The Sinner and the man were swallowed by a Ghoul Worm. I escaped with my life cause the worm chased after the fleeing pig horse." me and the Sinner are dead okay."

"O-okay, but what is pig horse?"

"Ah, the animals you guys rode on."

"You mean Bu Horse."

"That's the one. I'll be borrowing one Bu Horse since you got two. They'll know you're lying if you bring it with you. I'll send it back later, you have nothing to lose."

"Okay."

The man nods docilely.

--Alright, with this we got ourselves safety and a mean of transport.

I confirm once again.

"Now then, what should you say again? Try to repeat. Otherwise your wrist--"

"I-I'm talking! The man and the Sinner were swallowed by a Ghoul Worm. We were saved cause it was going for the Bu Horse afterward. That's good enough right?When will you take this grass off?"

I speak while stroking my chin.

"I will take the test and become a hero. After that I'll have to give my thanks to the village. In about a month."

"Y-you're going to be a hero huh.... Well, that'll probably happen."

The villager said that after glancing at the Ghoul Worm that had disappeared into mist.

For the time being, I'll tell him a lie.

"Actually, that Sinner. Became a Sinner by mistake."

"Eh?"

"We're going to the royal capital in order to correct that too."

"Is such a thing possible."

"It's by human. Everyone makes mistakes."

"I-I see...."

The villager nodded in thought.

Looks like he's thinking how advantageous it would be if he cooperated with me.

Then he looks up at me and speaks.

"Alright. I'll cooperate with you. I'm Balley. You can believe me."

"Really. Balley. Thanks. I'll go see you once I become a hero. Don't tear off the grass until then."

"Yea, I know."

Afterward, Balley put the fainted man on one of the Bu Horses and returned.

Well, since I didn't put the spell on the one on his wrist, it'd be alright even if he untied it.

I had to make an insurance in this another world where Celica is my only ally.

"Now then."

I go back to Celica who's laying on the plain.

Even with the intense battle, she's sleeping so peacefully like it doesn't concern her at all.

Haaa, I let out a long sigh.

--I'll probably go through the same thing again if I bring her with me.

But, "Please save me. I still want to live", was Celica's wish, I vowed to grant that and I had to protect that vow as a god. This has become troublesome.

Or rather, it's strange that her Sinner status wasn't found out until she was this old.

Putting that aside, what should I do.

Should I erase the Sinner status? But y'know.

Unlike 【Abnormal Status】 such as Gene Remodeling, 【Changing】 something that has been ascribed would incur opposition from the Gods of this world.

It's fine as long it doesn't get found out, but if possible I want to avoid it.

In the first place, Celica's face and name might be already known by the state.

According to what I've heard, when one becomes a hero, they can choose what to do with a Sinner on their discretion.

Then, maybe I should disguise her until then?

I look at Celica.

Red skirt and white coat. Doll-like slender limbs. Her big breasts are moving up and down.

Long eyelashes, gentle cheeks. Wavy blond hair, and white skin that looks like it's shining in the darkness of the night.

....She's beautiful. It'll be a waste to hide her.

Besides, Celica looks the brightest to me when she's behaving naturally. I want her to be free.

--No choice but to do it huh.

Gods of this world, I bear all the sin.

That's why, please don't punish her.

I kneel on one knee besides the lying Celica in the plain. I put my hand on her outstanding forehead. I put my other hand directly on her body from the gap on her clothes.

The unbelievable softness of the big breast and warm body temperature are transmitted on my hand.

"--<<Truth Sight>>"

I call forth Celica's status.

And then I tamper it while grabbing the big breast.

【Status】

Name: Celica Elde [Rem Adelstein]

Gender: Female

Age: 17 years old

Race: Human

Job: Merchant [(==)]

Class: Knight Lv 5 [===== Lv 17]

Element: 【Water】 【Light】

Modification, complete.

Celica is still sleeping as peacefully as ever even though her delicate body was groped.

By the way, I've made it so that the content inside [] can only be seen by me.

It'll be bad if I make a mistake when I restore after becoming a hero.

But well, with this much alteration, I can't make any excuse to the god of this world if they find this out.

They will certainly kill me.

--Fine by me, I've already decided.

I will definitely protect Celica.

Cause everything should go well as long as I become a hero--!

I put our baggage on the Bu Horse, and sat on the saddle with Celica in my arms.

She felt soft and very light in my arms.

Right at that moment, wind blows through, fluttering her hair while swaying the plain grass.

I advance slowly towards the royal capital.

CHAPTER 6

ROYAL CAPITAL AND EXAM AND TAVERN GIRL

Daphnes Kingdom located on the southeast of Alexshield Continent has many rich plains, the agriculture is prosperous. The parts that face the sea also do fishery.

At the center of a plain, the Royal Capital is situated at a junction between a large river flowing from the north to the south and a trade route connecting the east and the west.

It's a big city surrounded by a tall wall. A gorgeous castle that looks like a palace can be seen in the center of the city.

Several riverboats are moored at the inland port, unloading a lot of luggage.

People and carriages are coming and going on the stone paved road. Carrying plentiful grain, fresh vegetables, products from sea and mountains, it's very lively.

Celica and I go with the flow of people, walking on the stone paved main street.

Celica's blue eyes are looking around dazzlingly.

"It's a really big city.... so wonderful."

"Is this your first time here?"

"No...I've been here once when I was a child...but I was on a carriage."

She looks down with a sorrowful face.

"I see."

She's probably remembering the time when she was blessed as a princess.

I keep walking without saying anything.

Then, I smelled something nice.

Looking around, there's a square facing the main street with a fountain and food stalls.

Many trees are growing in the square, it looks like a park. There's a toilet-like two-

story building in the back.

"What's that smell?"

"Err... I think it's probably Fido Grill."

"The savory aroma is similar to sweet soy sauce.... Reminds me of shrine festivals."

"Y-yes.... Would you like me to go buy them?"

"Right, please do."

"I understand. I shall go buy them."

Celica heads to a food stall while looking a bit anxious.

I followed after her.

Celica talked to an old man shopkeeper and gave him money.

The old man quickly grilled some and handed them over.

"Here ya go! I gave ya some discount cos yer' a beauty, young lady."

"Thank you very much."

Celica bows, shaking her blond hair.

And then she ran up to me. With one on each hand.

I took it and looked at it carefully.

Fido Grill.

Powder made from mashed grain is mixed with water to create the dough, and then it's stretched and roasted.

And then salty-sweet grilled fish and leafy vegetables are put on top of it.

It looks like tacos visually.

Invited by the aroma, I tried to take a bite.

The crispy texture feels nice. The salty-sweet fish is elastic like octopus and squid.

The savoriness spread every time I chew. The sauce and the savoriness fills my mouth happily.

It tastes like okonomiyaki and grilled squid.

Yet the fresh vegetable' aroma and softness negate the thick feeling.

I gulped once.

"This is... really tasty."

"Yes, this is my first time eating one too, it's very delicious."

"So it was your first time--chomp"

"Yes, I wanted to eat them but my mother said that it was vulgar so--chomp"

"Aren't you glad--chomp"

"It's all thanks to Keika-sama--chomp"

Celica opens her small red lips and bites. Her mouth is chewing cutely.

We're having some trivial conversations while walking on the main street.

After a bit, I finished mine first.

Celica's mouth is small, she's still eating hers.

The pedestrian traffic decreased once we reached the edge of the main street.

An old building made of stone stands before us. The atmosphere feels like the Parthenon temple.

"This is the place to register for the hero examination?"

"Om nom.... Yes, that's right."

"Then let's get inside."

"Nom.... Please wait a minute, I'll finish this immediately."

"If it's hard for you, should I help?"

"Eh.... Ah yes."

For some reason, Celica's cheeks slightly redden, and then she presents the remaining half of the Fido Grill.

I grasp her small hand and take a big bite.

"Yum, it's good no matter how many times I eat this."

"Y-yes.... chomp."

Celica takes another big bite at the place I ate. Her face reddens to her ears.
I thought she didn't need to eat that desperately, then I took another bite.

After we'd finished eating, we entered the building.
There was nothing special about the registration procedure so I omitted it.
The registration fee was just a bit expensive. It became Celica's burden.
We finished the procedure while asking the staff members various things.

A staff member tells us as we're about to leave.

"Well then, the written exam will be tomorrow."

"Eh! Isn't it too early compared to last year?"

"This has been decided by the church this year. Well, someone who will become a hero should be able to do it anytime."

"B-but...."

Celica looked at me anxiously with downcast eyebrows.

Looks like she wants to say that there's no time to study.

I returned a smile while showing my teeth.

"Don't worry. It's as he said. If you're a hero there's no problem if it's today or tomorrow."

"A-as expected, Keika-sama."

Celica sighed while holding her big breasts.

Frankly speaking, I can cheat all I want with <<Senrigan>>.

And then we're going back to the entrance.

I noticed a big bronze statue in the first floor's lobby.

A bronze statue of a gallant man holding a sword. However, he was more than two meter tall.

"This statue sure is big."

"No, I think it's of the real size. It seems to be made accurately by modeling it after the real one."

I ask in surprise.

"A human this big?"

"Yes, Wind Hero Rakeus was rumored to inherit the blood of giants."

"He must be quite strong."

"He has left many legends. It was said he continued to win all kinds of battles. He only lost once."

"But he couldn't win against the demon king."

"...That's right. That one time was against the demon king."

"It must have been a hard fight for the demon king."

Then Celica shook her head. Her blond hair feebly shook.

"It seems it wasn't even a match."

"That can't be.... Ok, this was modeled after the real one right."

I squint my eyes at the bronze statue--<<Truth Sight>>.

It's possible to read the real status of a portrait or a sculpture made after the actual person.

The data was going to be of the bronze statue as an item for an instant, but I flicked that.

Next, Rakeus's status was shown.

【Status】

Name: Rakeus

Gender: Male

Race: Half Giant Tribe

Job: Hero

Class Master Swordsman Lv 74

Element: 【Wind】

Attack: 2400
Defense: 1300
Magic Attack: 0250
Magic Defense: 0530

...This guy's strong.

Far stronger than common men.

And as expected, his element is not light.

I wondered while looking at the statue.

"Strange...."

"What's the matter? Keika-sama."

Losing in thought, I didn't answer Celica's question.

The offensive and defensive power of monsters in this world are in four digits.

That means, even if the demon king is the strongest, his status should be at 9999.

On the other hand, Rakeus's offensive power is 2400. A difference of approximately four times.

A difference only this much can be easily overcome with a surprise attack, or by finding a good opportunity.

Thus, it's strange that the demon king could win without a hard fight.

For it to not even be a match, it's impossible unless the difference is of orders of magnitude like me.

--There must be something with the demon king. Something that makes him unbeatable with normal means.

When I was lost in thought, Celica anxiously picked the sleeves of my Wafuku with her

slender fingers.

"Um, what seems to be the matter....? Are you not feeling well?"

"It's nothing. I just had something in mind. That aside, let's find an inn."

"Understood, Keika-sama. Allow me to guide you."

Celica took my hand and then walked with a smile on her face.

Her supple hand pulls me.

We got out of the main street as I kept being guided.

We arrived at an inn in an alley at the end of the city. An old three-story building.

The first floor seems to be used as tavern and diner, rough looking men are drinking during the day.

I speak to an old man behind the counter at the back of the diner. He has a grizzled short hair with straight posture.

"You staying? It's two big silver coin a night for two people."

Seems to be 2000 yen.

Celica says.

"Could we stay for one month from today onward?"

"Yea, of course you can. That's one big gold coin."

Seems to be 100,000 yen.

Why is it more expensive. It should have been 60,000 yen.

No wait, one month is not 30 days is it?

Celica begs while looking sad.

"I'm sorry, we don't have enough..... Could you please lower it a bit more?"

"A business is all about getting your earning. Go elsewhere if you don't want to."

A remark that completely takes advantage of us.

Celica is looking down while frustratingly biting her red lips.

I couldn't help her since I was penniless of course.
I have to quickly become the hero and earn money.

Instead, I butt into the conversation.

"Old man. Since we're paying in advance for a long stay, can we get some discount here?"

"I already said. We're a business here."

"Fumu. Then how about we prepare our own meals?"

"Only at night?"

"Of course, morning too."

"So you say. Your strange clothes aren't only for show it seems."

He shrewdly changed the topic.

I was going to ask for discount for the unprovided meals if he agreed to it.

As expected of a businessman. I can't get him to promise it.

We're going nowhere like this.

I have no choice but to put out my trump card.

"What if I tell you that you can utilize me when I've become the hero?"

The old man's eyes sharpen.

"Hoo. I did think you were no ordinary person, so you're here to take the hero exam huh."

"That's right. And I will become one. I can prove it to you as long as it doesn't break the law."

"Hoho, that's some bold thing.... You have some good countenance."

The old man looks at me with appraising eyes while brushing his stubble on his square chin.

Then a voice comes from behind us, at the corner of the tavern.

"Forget about it. Cause I'm going to be the hero. --Right, guys?"

"Damn rite', aniki!"

"Der's no way that limpy man can become a hero."

Gyahahahaha, the three men laugh loudly. From their hair to their clothes, they look like barbarians.

The other guests are eating and drinking quietly while being careful not to meet their eyes.

I was irritated for an instant, but I quickly took a deep breath and calmed down.

However, Celica took a step forward with a crease on her forehead.

I grasped her arm and stopped her.

Celica glared as if asking, why did you stop me.

Her earnest blue eyes are beautiful.

I silently wave my head to restrain her.

The men still continue talking.

"But that woman's nice. Her breasts especially's huuge!"

"Hey, you blond girl, come here and drink with us."

"Cause Gaf-aniki's going to become the next hero for sure!"

"Yay"

The men toasted with their glasses.

There's a very well built man among them. The man called Gaf-aniki by the other men. He has unkempt hair and unshaved face. He looks like a bandit from somewhere. His clothing are tattered, as if he never took a bath.

However, only his sword and armor look like very refined goods.

One of the men shouts out loud.

"Oy, where's the drink! Aniki's glass is empty already!"

"Minya-chaan, come bring us~ I'll teach you how to grow adult's breasts."

The men laugh, gyahahahaha, again.

And then a girl shows up while opening the curtain on the entrance of the passage that connects to the kitchen behind the counter.

A delicate body of an early teen with swelling breasts. Her face looks well-mannered for one that young, her glossy black hair and big eyes are impressive.

She's wearing plain clothes and skirt and holding a tray with meals in her hands.

However, she was not a human.

Surprisingly, she had cat-like ears and tail.

Her triangle ears are flopped down.

"D-dad, I don't wanna go.... I don't want them to touch my body again...."

She said in a frightened voice.

The old man crumples his forehead wrinkle and mutters.

"Even if you say that...."

The men become even noisier.

I put my hand on the counter and speak.

"Old man, do you still call yourself a father then?"

"W-what!?"

"What if I say, I can grant your wish?"

"Can you do it? Those guys have the strength to back at least. They've been eating and drinking for free for 10 months already."

"I can. If you wish for it."

The old man looks at me silently.

I look back at him in silent.

"....Alright. Please do something about those guys."

"A, got it. --In my name, I grant thee thy wish."

As I leave the counter, Celica catches my Wafuku's sleeve in panic.

"Ke-Keika-sama.... If you hurt someone you won't be able to partake in the hero exam-
_"

"Don't worry. I won't fight."

I pat her blond hair to relieve her.

And then I squint my eyes at the men.

--<<Truth Sight>>.

The men's status appeared in front of me.

CHAPTER 7

VIOLENCE OF WORDS AND CRAMMING FOR EXAM

At the inn's tavern.

I summoned the status of the three thugs.

【Status】

Name: Saz

Job: Bandit

Class: Swordsman Lv 22

Element: 【Earth】

【Equipment】

Weapon: Ice Sword of Exorcism 【Robbery and Murder Item】 : Added ice damage on monsters

Armor: Chain Mail 【Stolen Item】 : With Coat of Arms

【Status】

Name: Maz

Job: Bandit

Class: Archer Lv 18

Element: 【Wind】

【Equipment】

Weapon: Swift Arbalest 【Stolen Item】 : Can shoot continuously Aiming improvement

Armor: Fairy Clothes 【Lost Item】 : Aiming and Willpower improvements

【Status】

Name: Gaff

Gender: Male

Age: 30

Race: Human

Job: Bandit Head

Class: Warrior Lv 34

Element: 【Fire】

【Equipment】

Weapon: Explosive Great Sword 【Robbery and Murder Item】 : Added explosive damage Low probability to cause Instant Death

Armor: Chimera Scale Armor 【Robbery and Murder Item】 : Agility improvement Weightless Floating

I omitted the numerical values since they're just small fries.

The important thing is their job, **【Bandit】** .

I thought they were shady looking, but their jobs are just as bad.

If it was **【Thieves】** then they could've possibly been [Labyrinth invader=adventurer].

And their equipment.

【Stolen Item】 and **【Lost Item】** .

【Robbery and Murder Item】 is something you got by killing and plundering someone.

Of course their normal clothes and accessories are all stolen goods too.

They're worse scums than I expected.

I came to the table where the bandits were sitting.

The three faintly smiled like they were making fun of me.

"Whaddya want beggar."

"Yer' face and clothes look like one too."

"He's got a woman paying for him after all."

Gyahaha, the men laughed unsightly.

I was going to snap for an instant but I gritted my teeth and endured it.

--Bear it, me. My bright future will be for naught if I resort to violence here.

I took a deep breath and held my anger down.

I looked down at the sitting Gaff from the side.

"You guys are noisy. I'm gonna call the guards."

"Ooh, go on and call them. We're just drinking merrily in this tavern."

"Are you sure?"

"Like they'll arrest us for clamoring in a tavern."

Gaff laughed while showing her yellow crooked teeth.

I draw close to his face and whisper.

"Are you really sure? Those sword and armor are not yours right? They're item with names. You'd get in trouble if they check it wouldn't you?"

"W-what!"

The color of his eyes change.

I look down while smiling faintly.

"Get out in silent. And don't ever come back. I'll let you off without calling the guards if you do. It'll be bad if you get in trouble right before the hero exam right?"

"Damn! You!"

I glare at Gaff. A dirty bearded face. The bottom of his heart from his eyes is muddy.

The two other bandits are exchanging looks while watching the situation.

They're unexpectedly smart.

Gaff suddenly stood up. He shook the table and the chair fell down.

"Look forward to the hero exam! Don't ya dare fail at the written exam! I'm definitely gonna tear your limbs to pieces!"

"Is that right. So there's no problem if people die during the hero exam."

I grinned, showing a ghastly smile.

Uu, the bandits hold their breath from my intensity.

Gaff immediately pulled himself together and spat on the floor.

"Keh, let's change place!"

He perk his shoulders and gets out of the tavern.

I call his back.

"Oy, you guys. Pay the bill."

"Tch!"

Gaff took one big gold coin from his pocket and threw it at the old man innkeeper.

And then he left with his underlings.

The tavern became quiet.

The tense atmosphere is relaxing.

I came back to the counter.

The old man stared in amazement.

"What did you do!? Was it magic?"

"No, I just greeted them."

When I grin, Minya hugs me with her slender arms.

"Onii-chan.... Thank you."

I can feel child-like warmth from her slender body.

I pat her head. Fine lustrous black hair.

"I'm glad for you."

Minya is squinting like a cat, it seems she feels comfortable.

The old man was still surprised.

"To think you drove them out without getting violent...."

He must have thought that I would cause trouble and intended to have us all arrested.
I just didn't kill them here.
I'll have them experience the atonement for insulting a god.

Celica leaked a sigh from her red lips.

"As expected of Keika-sama. Keika-sama is truly fit to be the hero."

"Thanks. Leaving that aside. What kind of thing is Hero Exam?"

Gaff said that he would kill me in the hero exam.

Is he going to kill me by making it look like an accident, or will he do it directly.

Looks like it'll be disadvantageous if I don't find out about that.

Celica smoothly talks while thinking.

"Hero Exam is a test for 『Wisdom』 , 『Courage』 , 『Strength』 , and 『Rigthenousness of Heart』 needed by a hero."

"『Wisdom』 is the written exam huh."

"Yes, that's right."

The old man says while stroking his chin.

"『Courage』 is that, the Tower of Trial y'see. It'll be a blast."

"Are you going to participate too old man?"

"Don't be foolish. We're just watching."

"They're going to broadcast it with magic or something huh."

"Exactly. There's a bet for the one who cleared it the fastest."

"I see."

In other words, it'll be hard to legally kill someone in the Tower of Trial.

Celica speaks from the side.

"The inside of the Tower of Trial is a dungeon, it's like a complex maze. There are

monsters and traps too. You have to challenge the tower with a party of at least three people."

Three people.... So that's why Gaff brought two underlings.

"We have no choice but to employ the other one huh. It will cost us again."

The old man grins and laughs.

"Then should I search for someone with good skills?"

"Are you sure? We can't spend too much y'know?"

"What. There are some guys with piled up tabs. I'll have them participate instead of paying. They'll gather in a week."

The old man picked a notebook on the counter and flapped it with his finger.

"We're saved. Thanks."

"Thank you very much."

Celica and I honestly thanked him.

Then I ask Celica.

"Do all participants enter from the same place at the same time?"

"No every participants enter from separate entrances. It's said they rarely meet inside."

"I see. Then it'll be the next one if we're going to meet them."

I said that while patting Minya who was still hugging me. She's purring. The cat ears are moving as if they're going to jump.

Celica replies while tilting her head.

"Next one? Umm, the exam for 『Strength』 will be in the arena. The candidates of heroes who have cleared the tower will enter a tournament and fight one-on-one."

"And there are times when people die there right?"

"That's right. Please be careful."

Her blue eyes are staring with light full of concern.

"Don't worry."

I patted her head while smiling confidently.

Her soft blond hair feels nice on my fingers.

Celica looks down with a red face.

Arena huh, isn't it just perfect.

I'll let him know his place while being watched by a lot of people.

Let's think of the method. This will be fun.

I look at the old man.

"Then you'll let us stay here for a month won't you?"

"But of course."

"How much?"

"We've got it already."

After saying that the old man picked up the big gold coin thrown by Gaff and grinned.

I also reflexively smiled back.

"Thanks."

"What's your name?"

"Keika. This girl with me is Celica."

"I'm Kynmerick, nice to meet you. --Oy, Minya! How long you're going to play around!
Guide these two."

"....Okay."

Minya received a key from her father and headed to a stair in the back. Her short skirt flutters, her shoulder-length black hair shakes.

After getting to the bottom of the stairs, she turned back.

"Follow me...."

Celica and I followed after Minya.

We're led to a room in the southeast corner of the third floor.

Thankfully there are windows on the south and the east, making it quite bright. The view is also good.

Moreover, it's quite spacious and furnished with furnitures, by all appearances this seems expensive.

I ask Minya.

"Is this room really alright? We're staying for one month you know?"

"Yes... Dad gave this room's key...."

"I see.... But, what about you Celica?"

"Eh, no... um."

"We can change if you don't want to."

The reason why I asked that.

Because there's only one bed. A king-size big bed is installed next to the wall.

With her whole face red up to her ears, Celica stares at the bed while biting her finger.

"I-I don't particularly mind."

"I see. It's wide enough for two people after all. Minya, we're staying in this room."

"Yes.... Keika Onii-chan."

Minya gave the key to me with her slender hand and left with her tail swinging. She was a girl who didn't talk too much and acted hesitantly but I felt that her steps had lightened a bit.

Refreshing breeze blew from the opened windows. The white curtains were shaken by the wind.

I sit on the bed and tap the place beside me.

"Celica, why won't you sit?"

"Eh!? From daytime!?"

"Yeah, from now."

Then Celica blushes, fidgeting with her fingers in front of her big breasts.

"B-but.... It's still so bright...."

"What are you saying? We won't make it in time for the exam if we don't start now right?"

"Eh? --Ah, you're right! We have to study."

Celica briskly walked and sat beside me with disheveled blond hair.

The two of us are sitting on the bed side by side. I smelled flower fragrance from her blond hair since we sat close together.

"What kind of problems will come out in the written exam?"

"There will be histories of each nations, and battles against the demon king. Knowledge about weapons, armor and item. Every kind of magic system. Type of monsters and the way to deal with them. Those kinds."

....There's a lot.

I do think that those are necessary knowledge for a hero in his journey.

--Can that stupid-looking Gaff guy pass this?

Absolutely impossible.

But that guy was full of confidence.

There must be a back door.

Looks like I'd better check it out.

That said, since they're knowledge that are important to have living as a hero from now on, I've decided to ask Celica to teach me.

It's troublesome though.

However, it wasn't actually that difficult when I studied about them.

Well, the history is the same in any world; humans repeating the same foolishness, and game knowledge is useful for the weapon, armor and monsters.

Similar-looking creatures have the same weakness in another world and fantasy.

As for magic, it seems there is divine magic--although the name is different, the system is similar.

The only thing I don't know is the art of manipulating artificial creations--magic to command golems and homonculus.

I can probably manage.

For the time being, I'm glad that I played games and read manga in my free time during the proselytizing back then.

Why is it that I can't be honestly happy though.... Kuh.

In the end, it was already night when we were done.

CHAPTER 8

NIGHT STROLL AND EXAM COUNTERMEASURE

Midnight.

In the bedroom of the inn

Exhausted after teaching me, Celica is sleeping in the big bed.

It seems she's having a nightmare, her noble face is warped and she sometimes tosses over while groaning "Uuun."

Her clothes are in disorder, her white skin and collarbone are peeking. Her blond hair is spread.

I kindly pat her head with my hand.

And then, Celica mutters sorrowfully.

"Dear....mother...."

"....Adelstein huh."

When Celica talked about the histories of countries and demon king's deeds, there were times when she creased her forehead.

It was about Adelstein Kingdom.

It seemed to be a kingdom in the mountains to the northwest, a beautiful country surrounded by greenery.

The kingdom was able to keep its independence since it was situated in a hard-to-approach location. Rather, apparently it was deemed unworthy to be occupied.

However, the moment they found a gem mine, the demon king attacked and destroyed it in no time at all.

--It'd be nice if I can get her back there someday.

As I muttered that in my mind, Celica twisted her body while groaning, "Uu...n" again.

Unlike before, her face is smiling beautifully.

"Keika, sama...."

A voice that sounded spoiled leaked from the red lips.

Since she seems alright now, I separate my hand.

And stand up.

"Now then."

I put on my Geta and leave the room.

I'm going to investigate the reason for Gaff's composure.

In a street corner late at night.

Magical lights are illuminating the stone pavements at equal intervals.

Only clip-clop sounds from the Geta echoed.

I peeked at several taverns and diner that were still open, but I only saw the underlings, not Gaff himself.

--He must be plotting something.

I walked around in the city leisurely while following Gaff's dirty presence.

And then I arrived at the hero registry. A massive building that looks like a temple.

Of course, the huge double gate is shut tight.

I check that there's no one around. There's no presence either.

"O wind, carry me."

I put some strength in my legs and fly

I jumped to the stone roof at the third floor.

Views of the townscapes in the darkness surrounded by tall walls can be seen below.

--<<Senrigan>>

I keep my eyes open and look at the registry's rooms one by one.

There's a large hall with a lot of desks on the second floor.

This seems to be the exam room.

I look at another room.

A parlor with carpet spread.

It's the staff room.

"Oh?"

There are two men in a large room with only a desk on the back of the third floor.

A bald old man with good physique and a filthy unshaven man--Gaff.

They're talking about something.

--<<Great Eavesdrop>>

I could hear their conversation immediately.

"I've got you the money right. You can arrange that much."

"Even if you tell me that. I'm telling you that it's impossible."

"I want to kill that guy asap! I ain't gonna forgive him."

I'm with you.

Rather, he bought the hero qualification with money huh.

He's going to do as he pleases if he becomes the hero.

The bald old man pats his head.

"Then we can just make you two meet in the first round of the tournament."

"Nah. I couldn't see the that guy's depth. I'd surely be killed."

Hoo. He's got good eyes even though they're rotten.

The bald old man shakes his head.

"For putting instant death traps in the tower, I can't say that it's not possible but it's not enough."

"How about this!"

Gaff took several big gold coins from his pocket.

The bald old man smiles while picking up the gold coins.

"Is this all?"

"Damn! Looking down on me!"

Gaff took all his money from his pocket. Creating a hill on the desk.

The bald old man speaks while pulling them.

"Fine then. I'll arrange it."

"Ou. I paid a lot 'fter all! Do your job!"

It's probably stolen money.

Gaff left the room. And then he left the registry from a back door.

I thought of the insult for an instant when I saw his defenseless back, but I held myself back since it was not the right time.

It really makes me recall just how much of a quick tempered malevolent god I was in Japan.

Instead, I keep watching the bald old man with good physique.

The bald old man gathered the gold coins and went to one corner of the room.

There's a big iron box as tall as a person. It's probably a safe.

He mutters while putting the money inside.

"I just need to reconstruct one place. It's cheaper that way."

The bald old man laughed, kukuku.

This raccoon dog seems to be one step ahead the other one.

Serves him right.

Still, an instant death trap in one place huh.

It's probably either crushing by walls, poisonous gas or drowning.

No, it seems he's trying to make it as cheap as possible, so it might be just some flying arrows or spears coated with poison.

Where is this Tower of Trial. I can't see any tall building besides the castle in this city. Judging by the date, the reconstruction should start tomorrow.

Well, I think I'll be fine but Celica who will be going with me might be in danger. I'll go see it just in case.

Or rather, I noticed a bunch of papers inside the safe.

Exam papers.

I carefully looked at them and learned the questions.

Then I went back.

The next day.

I went to see the Tower of Trial at once. Walking in the lively main street.

Celica is beside me. Her blond hair bathed in the morning sun looks like it's shining.

Minya who's guiding us are walking with her tail tucked between her legs and looking frightened while watching the surroundings.

I call at her small back.

"What's wrong? Are you afraid of something?"

"N-no... I'm fine."

Even though she said that, her triangle ears were flopped down and her body were curled up while walking.

Celica puts her face beside mine and whispers. Her breath tickles my ears.

"Beastfolks like catfolks are born in the north."

I got what she was trying to say since she taught me many things yesterday.

"I see. They're thought as the demon king's underlings and are persecuted huh."

"That's right, Keika-sama."

"....."

I stared at Celica's blue eyes. Stared by me, her big eyes blinked.

"Wh-what's the matter Keika-sama?"

"Do you hate beastfolks?"

"There is no way! My country was near the beatsfolk's dwelling, so we got along very well. You'll know that they're all very kind once you associate with them."

"Is that right. I'm sorry for doubting you."

"Please, I'm happy if Keika-sama understands me."

Her words had no lie.

I think her truly honest and kind personality is her cute side.

After a while, Minya stopped before an open space that looked like a public park. The place with Fido Grill stalls.

She pointed at the back of the open space.

"Keika onii-chan.... there."

"That is?"

Beyond a water fountain, there's a round building that looks to be two-story high by appearance. There's a flag on its flat roof. There's an exit on the second floor.

I thought it was a toilet or a water tower when I saw it yesterday.

Minya murmurs.

"The inside is put under magic so... wide."

"Is that right. --Thank you for guiding us."

I patted her straight black hair while thanking her. She, who was feeling tense, squinted her eyes and purred, funya~, looking comfortable.

Celica speaks.

"However, why did Keika-sama suddenly want to come here?"

"I wanted to check it out before the exam. It might be in the written exam right?"

Not might, it actually does.

Celica nods admiringly, hoo hoo~

"As expected of Keika-sama. You haven't neglected the measure for the exam."

"Can we see it closer?"

"Yes, please. I'll go with you."

We approached the tower.

Soldiers are guarding around the tower. Looks like it's a no-entry. I guess it's obvious.

After circling the tower, I see that there are several entrances along the outer wall.

There are numbers stuck on the entrances. From 1 to 32.

"What are those numbers?"

"I wonder? I just learned of this now."

"Do you know about it Minya?"

Minya shook her small head. Her shoulder-length black hair swayed.

"Different, from last year."

"I see.... No wait, I see."

It's most likely done to ensure me getting to the trap by having a drawing lot this year and 'accidentally' get me to the prepared entrance.

--Oh.

Rattling sounds of a carriage being carried by pig horses--Buu Horses arrived at the open space.

It stopped beside the tower and then men wearing worker clothes begin to work.

On the carriage, together with the construction tools like hammers and pickaxes,

there's a one-meter tall gray box of stone.

I can see malice-like negative aura just by squinting at that stone box.

--What the heck is that. No, it's probably the instant death trap, but it's way off than I expected y'know?

And, just when I thought of checking the inside.

<<Senri-->>

『!!! Don't look!!』

Suddenly, a shock as if my head was pummeled ran through me!

A voice echoed directly in my brain. A high-pitched child-like voice.

I got goosebumps the moment it reached my brain.

I reflexively put my hand on my forehead and endure the headache.

--Giving this much mental damage to a God like me.

It's an existence equaling me no matter how you look at it.

In other word, the owner of this voice should be a 『God』 .

The voice still continues to echo.

『Don't look! Don't touch! Please, run away!』

I search for the origin of the voice.

I looked around the open space with fountain, at the crowd walking on the main street beyond that, at the surrounding houses, and then at the water tower-like round tower--and I finally found it.

Inside the stone box, I could hear a voice mixed with begrudging wails.

....Are you confined together?

『Don't look!!You can hear my voice?』

--Yeah. Who are you?

『Anyhow, don't look! Don't look, don't look at Lapisia!』

I tried to ask other things, but it single-mindedly said, "Don't look", I couldn't hold a conversation.

--Okay.

For now it seems I can't look. I should obey a Warning of God this desperate. But then the situation won't be resolved.

I used <<Truth Sight>> instead of Senrigan.

【Coffin of Lapisia】

- A coffin confining a God possessed by wrath and hatred. Anyone who sees the figure will turn to stone.

Uwah. A God that has been turned into vengeful spirit huh. Moreover, petrification. An absurdly troublesome existence.

They got a power up just by becoming that so even I would definitely be turned to stone.

Or rather, I'm just too weak since I only have one believer.

What should I do. Rather, why is there a child with the God. And is the child safe.

As I groan, Celica puts her hand on my forehead. I'm healed by the soft kind warmth.

"What seems to be the matter Keika-sama?"

"Ah, right. nothing I can do worrying about it alone. Does Celica know a God called Lapisia?"

"Lapisia....? I'm sorry I have never heard of that god."

She never heard of it? That's impossible. Is it a forgotten god?

"Then, is there any place where we can investigate myths?"

"There might be old records in the royal library."

Celica looks straight at me with her blue eyes.

Right at that time, several workers lift the stone box and enter the third door.

I ask while pursuing them with my eyes.

"I also want to see the appearance of a monster called Octopus Ton."

Since it's in the written exam.

"I think we can read that too in the illustrated book in the royal library. Let me guide you there."

"Alright. Let's go there."

Minya speaks remorsefully while looking frightened.

"I, have to work, so...."

"Shall we escort you?"

"I'm fine...."

Minya walked at a quick pace with her tail upward while being cautious of the surroundings.

Celica and I are walking on the stone-paved main street in the refreshing morning air.

We're not conversing much.

I continue to be deep in thought.

For now I have to investigate this God called Lapisia, otherwise I can't become the hero. I won't be able to protect Celica. I won't be able to become a God.

I have a way, but if possible I don't want to use that.

Now then, could we find the way to deal with it before the exam?

No, that's wrong. I absolutely have to find it!

I walked while biting my molars.

CHAPTER 9

CRAMMING FOR EXAM AT THE LIBRARY

The Royal Library is at the center of the city next to the castle.

In contrast to the castle with its many palace-like steeples, the Royal Library is a rectangular building made of stones. It's gray colored and looks sturdy.

Celica and I enter inside. Many bookshelves are put close together narrowly.

The smell of old books is pervasive inside the building. The windows are small, probably to prevent discolorations from sun rays. It's lit with magical light even though it's still noon.

There's a lot of illustrated books and practical guides that are popular near the entrance.

The second floor houses the literatures.

It seems records and such are stored underground. I don't know how many floors are under the ground, but it seems only people with high social positions could enter the second basement floor and below.

We went to the first basement floor to check out the monster that would appear in the exam, Octopus Ton.

By the way, Octopus Ton was a devil with bull horns, spider arms and octopus legs.

We look for books related to myths.

The myths of this world resemble the other myths. Creation God created the world, and let its children Gods to rule it. God of Sky, God of Earth, God of Wood, Water, Fire and such.

Amongst them, the newly born God Vanus, the holy god spread his influence, gaining many believers. It seems he has the power to defeat monsters and demon king.

The priests and cardinals of this country are also of Vanus belief.

Leaving that aside, we couldn't find the God called Lapisia.

"Nothing here."

Celica lets out a sigh with her hand on her cheek.

"I've never heard of it... Where did Keika-sama know it from?"

"Well, I just happened to overheard it in a tavern."

"Is that right. Should we continue to investigate?"

"I'd rather check out ceremonies for Gods."

If I can't defeat it, I don't have any choice but to calm its spirit.

I'm not sure if it would listen to an appeal from an outsider like me though.

In the first place, I'll likely get turned to stone during the ceremony.

Since I was told not to look at it, maybe it can be done somehow if I just don't look at the figure. Like the Greece's Gorgon myth.

I unintentionally stop my hand and mutter.

"Mirror huh..."

"What's the matter?"

"I was thinking the way to cope with petrification attacks."

"There should be no monster that dangerous in the exam."

"It's going to appear from the rumor I heard though. Haa."

"Such a dreadful thing...."

"Well, in the worst case scenario, I have a way to deal with it though."

I have no choice but to use my trump card.

I'll fiddle with the drawing lots and pick anything but number 3.

If it's going to be decided unilaterally instead of drawing lots, I'll tear off all the paper on the tower's entrances and shift them when the guards aren't looking.

We can pass it safely if I do that.

...But then, I won't be able to save the child God who told me not to look.

And that will mean I'm running away from Gaff's scheme.

As a God, I can't stand that.

The real victory is by completely winning against scums.

"They sell Earth Holy Water for curing petrification. However, items that can prevent petrification are very expensive. The cash in hands are..."

Celica looks down. A sorrowful look appears on her graceful face.

Having no money is painful.

However, petrification is even more painful.

You won't be able to move once you become a stone, you can't go back to your original form if the stone is broken.

"No, wait?"

"Keika-sama?"

"You should just be a stone from the beginning!!"

"Y-you're too loud, Keika-sama."

She caught and pulled my Wafuku's sleeve.

A librarian wearing a long robe came to the bookshelves related to myths where we were. He's smiling, but his eyes are not.

"What seems to be the matter? Were you not able to find the document you want?"

"Uh, sorry for being loud. We were investigating a God called Lapisia, but we had no success."

"Lapisia? --Ah, that one is not here."

"Eh? You know about it!?"

"Yes it's one of the minor legends. If I'm not mistaken the title should be 『Maternal

Love』 . The child is not actually a God, but one born between human and God."

"W-where can I read that!?"

"I think it's on the first floor at the place with children books."

"Thank you! We're saved!"

I see, it's a half-god so it's not in the myths.

While smiling, the librarian's blood vessel pops up.

"And also, please keep your voice down in the library."

"I'm sorry."

"We're sorry."

Celica and I went to the first floor after apologizing.

We went out of the dim basement, and felt warm just from the sunlight coming from the small windows.

The place with children books.

I pulled the 『Maternal Love』 from a picture book's bookshelf.

I read it at once. The story was like this.

The Earth Goddess fell in love with a human man.

They lived happily together and a child was born.

However, it was an unforgivable act for a God.

The Creation God who knew about the circumstance ordered the goddess to kill the child.

The goddess was going to kill the child.

However, her love for her child was too strong, she couldn't do it.

She even thought of offering her life instead to seek pardon.

However, if she died, the earth would also die.

Suddenly, the goddess's husband thought of a good idea.

They would lie about killing the child, and hide the child in a coffin buried in the earth. The Creation God was no longer enraged, the goddess and her husband lived together for a long time.

The child is still sleeping even now, embraced by the Mother Earth.

And they lived happily ever after.

....So that's Lapisia.

The story has probably been quite distorted, yet there are a lot of cases where parts of a legend are true.

In other words, rather than containing Lapisia's wrath itself, I should borrow the mother's power instead.

Burying the coffin is probably the quickest and easiest method.

With a cheerful look on my face, I speak to Celica who should be nearby.

"Alright. The prospect looks good. Let's go back."

"Fe, ah, yes."

Celica almost dropped the book in her hand. She was reading a different picture book.

"Do you like picture books?"

"My mother often read me this book. I love this story the most."

"Hee."

"It's a story about a girl who's tired of her carefree life with nothing happening, she goes on an adventure and finds her own prince-sama."

"Hee."

"It's very wonderful you see!"

With sparkling blue eyes, she said that powerfully like a dreaming girl.

"Hmmm. Good for you. Now, let's go back."

"Ah, you don't understand the splendor of this story do you! This is~"

She kept on insisting during our way back to the inn.

I could memorize it by reading once since I had memory improvement, but since Celica looked like she was having fun, I ended up just nodding to her.

Just hearing her bell-like clear voices was fun.

Next day. The day of the exam.

It was a refreshingly clear morning.

After eating some light breakfast, I immediately went to the hero registry.

I passed through to the second floor hall.

Many single desks are lined up. I counted about 100 seats.

Half of them are already occupied by the hero candidates. These guys seem used to it.

I take a seat in the back. Ultimately there are about 80 people participating.

Gaff came in the last minute.

He was in plain clothes and acted lazily like he wasn't going to take an exam. His breath smells of alcohol.

He's probably going to pass even if he just writes some random things.

I wait for it to begin while looking down on him.

After a while an old man wearing priest clothes entered the room.

Looks like he's the proctor.

He talks with a hoarse voice.

"Ee, good morning everyone who's aiming to become the hero. We will now begin the

test of 『Wisdom』 required for a hero. Geography, history, weapon, armor, magic. Monsters' weak points. All the wisdom needed for a hero as a leader who commands his party. We will choose 32 people with the highest marks from this exam. The test will end when the sun has inclined in the western sky."

""HUH?""

Everyone clamored.

"Shouldn't it be until sunset!?"

"That's way too short."

Looks like it's shorter than the last year's exam.

They must be thinking that prolonging this will only waste money since Gaff, who's paid them a lot, will become the hero anyway.

The examiner looks completely unfazed.

"Those who aspire to become a hero have to be able to cope with any situation. And we will announce the result of the exam today at sunset."

"What the heck!"

"That's way too fast!"

Right at that time, one man raises his hand.

"Last year, the people who passed the exam drew lots in another day to decide the turns to enter the Tower of Trial, how will it be this year?"

The examiner answers like it's natural.

"This time they will be assigned sequentially from 1-32, from the highest score to the lowest."

The room rustles again.

They're doing as they please. Mine is definitely the third then.

However, no one was against it.

Since everyone is in the same situation, they unwillingly approve.

Papers are distributed, and then it starts.

The room is filled with noises of pens moving on the paper.

When someone wants to go to the toilet, they get blindfolded and taken away.

The exam is over by the evening.

I answered all of them. There should be no mistake.

It might have been a pointless effort, but I also thought of it as a way to review hero's knowledge.

The score was not announced, only the order was.

Well they can't exactly announce Gaff's score after all.

The examiner speaks while looking at a sheet of paper in his hand.

"The first who passes the written exam, Gaff."

"No way...." "Why is that guy...."

The room is filled with surprises, and resenting mutters.

Gaff stood up and laughed gahaha.

"Failing at these little problems huuh. You guys ain't qualified to be the hero."

"Kuh....!" "Dammit....!"

The atmosphere inside worsen.

The second one was another guy.

The next one was me.

"Third, Keika."

Well, I've already expected this.

And then, the atmosphere inside subtly changes.

"Oy, that guy's...."

"Isn't Keika the guy who drove Gaff away?"

"Is he that strong."

"You serious. I'd like to see that."

It's already become a rumor in the city huh.

Looks like that Gaff guy is really hated. He probably acted violently in other shops besides the old man's.

Together with admiring looks from everyone, I look at Gaff with smirking eyes.

"Tch!"

Gaff grandly clicked his tongue and went out of the room after glaring at me with begrudging eyes.

You're the bad one here. That guy is really irritating me.

Well anyway, for now it's ended as planned--.

Just when I thought that.

The examiner who's standing in front of us speaks with a hoarse voice.

"That is all for the announcement. Congratulations for those who passed. For those who failed, please try again next year and work hard to defeat the demon king. --Well then, excuse me."

Several people stood up. Some heaves a sigh of relief, some bitterly bites their lips.

However, the examiner utters unexpected things lastly.

"Also, the test of 『Courage』 will be held in three days from now. People who failed this test cannot enter the party. Please participate as a hero next year."

""EEEH!""

I also reflexively shouted.

The men are pressing on together.

"I was going to hire the guys who failed!"

"We won't make it in time now!"

Such and such.

However, since we're all under the same condition again, they yielded.

I'm thinking.

Gaff who is already in a party with his underlings overwhelmingly holds the advantage.

The exam this time is really set for Gaff to win.

Just how much did they pay them.

Rather, that guy left without hearing this.

He probably already knew about it. It's just as planned huh.

I'm thinking with folded arms. Creases are formed on my forehead.

I had asked the tavern old man to look for people but he said it would take one week.

Moreover, you can't hire people who fail the hero exam.

That means, skilled people in this Royal Capital will be in high demand.

They probably will decline if we don't pay them.

I wanted to hire a thief or a priest, but it's probably impossible.

--Now then, what should I do.

I left the hall which continued to be noisy and went back to the inn while deep in thought.

CHAPTER 10

CELEBRATION FOR THE EXAM

The royal capital Chloe is dyed madder red at the day's end.

I walked back to the inn after passing the exam.

Then I noticed a signboard [Reserved Today] put in the front.

I thought it was strange, when I went inside, it had become a party venue.

Tables are put in the center of the tavern forming a big one.

Many dishes on large platters are put on them. A one meter long fish, butter roasted shellfish, chicken karage, unknown meat on skewers with vegetables.

Appetizing steams are rising from every one of them.

The tavern old man who came out bringing a large platter filled with meatballs glazed with sweet sauce laughed heartily when he saw me.

"Oh, you're back! Everyone, here comes the leading actor!"

Celica smiled.

"Welcome back, Keika-sama."

"Keika Onii-chan... welcome back."

Minya was expressionless, but I'd like to think that she was smiling in her heart.

The other guests also congratulated me. A pair of man and woman who look like adventurers approach.

"Congratulations."

"Coming at third, you're amazing."

"Thank you."

For some reason being congratulated by people who don't know the truth feel embarrassing.

Celica comes to my side while swaying her hair. A white blouse and a red skirt. Since she's not wearing her armor, her breasts shake just from her walking.

She puts her hands on her big breast and sighs in admiration.

"Keika-sama is really amazing to come in third for the written exam."

Celica's smile was full of sense of respect.

The third place is a result of a fixed exam though, I thought as I scratched my head.

"It's thanks to Celica's support."

"No such thing, I only helped a little. The actual study time was only two days."

I wonder what my actual ranking is.

When I have some free time someday, I'll threaten the bald old man to tell me.

Celica's sparkling blue eyes are looking straight at me.

"Let's keep this up. I will lend Keika-sama as much power as possible."

"You've been quite the help already. Thank you."

I pat her head. Feeling her pleasant blond hair.

She smiled like she was about to cry, 'hauu', her whole face to her ears is red in embarrassment.

The old man raises his voice while smiling broadly.

"Now, eat eat! We still have many dishes! Drink all you want!"

WAAA~, the tavern is full of shouts of joy.

The old man goes in and out of the kitchen busily. I want to talk to him, but it seems he can't afford to.

I call the old man when he passes me once.

"Let's have a talk later."

"Got it."

After affirming that, the old man went into the kitchen once again.

In his place, Minya came out with some fruits and went to my side. She presents a red fruit that looks like plum to me.

"This... tasty. For onii-chan."

"Thanks. --Hm, is this sweet?"

Minya nodded. Her ears are standing upright, paying attention.

I took a bite. Fruit juice overflows. It's sweet yet the citrus-like fragrance that spreads in my mouth quenches my throat.

"It's really tasty."

"Red juice, stain on cloth is bad.... watch out."

"Got it. It tastes good, but the color sure looks odious."

According to Truth Sight, this seems to be 【Rubera Fruit】. There's no particular effect. Besides its producing area and price, it's only written that it's tasty and juicy. I bite it once again in relief. While being careful with the red juice.

"....Keika Onii-chan."

"Hm? What is it?"

Minya stares up with her big black eyes while keeping silent. Her ears twitched. Her black tail is shaking like it's undulating.

And then she speaks up.

"Become a hero, beat, bad people."

"Is that your wish?"

"Un."

Her tail flexibly stood up. As if showing her determination, it's slightly shaking.

"Understood. In my name, I will grant thee thine wish."

"....Thank you, onii-chan."

With slightly reddened cheeks, she went back to the kitchen with her tail still standing up.

And the buffet party continued.

The other guests are eating and drinking while having pleasant chats. I listened to various useful stories about monsters, dungeons and the hero exams that come after this from many adventurers.

The sweet fruit wine I drink at times pleasantly pervades my body.

Celica keeps accompanying me and diligently brings me alcohol and dishes.

"I've brought some Fido Grill."

"Oh. Thanks.Om...yup, this nostalgic taste is good. --Rather, Celica, you won't be able to eat if you keep serving me."

"It's alright, there's so much food, I can eat later...."

"These Takoyaki and Fido Grill won't taste as good when they're cold--here."

"He!?"

I push the bitten Fido grill in front of Celica.

Her eyes are wide open.

"What's wrong? Look, the inside is the tastiest."

"No, well... um."

Her shapely eyebrows are lowered, she looks troubled.

I move the Fido Grill closer to her cute mouth.

"Here, aan."

"Au.... A-aan."

She closes her eyes with the long eyelashes.

She opens her red lips elegantly and takes a bite.

And then, her moist blue eyes look up at me while her small mouth is chewing.

The gently-sloping cheeks are tinged with red as if she's just taken a bath.

....I wonder why.

It felt like I was bullying her even though I was just feeding her.

But, since I want her to eat them before they're cold, I push another dish after tasting it once. She groaned, "Uu", like she was about to cry.

We ate one Fido Grill together alternately.

However, she declined the last bite shaking her head and crouched down on the floor.

Her blond hair is spread on her thin back.

"Mou, I can't believe you Keika-sama."

"What"

I activate <<Truth Sight>> in a hurry and look at my own palm.

【Status】

Name: Keika Hiko-no-Mikoto

Gender: Male

Age: ?

Race: All Gods

Job: God

Class: Master Swordsman God Monk

Element: 【Noble Wind】 【Clear Stream】 【Faint Gleam】

【Parameters】

Strength: 51110(+1110)

Agility: 718100(+1810)

Magic: 92010(+2010)

Wisdom: 21310(+1310)

Believers: 3

Good, my believers haven't decreased.... don't tease me.

Rather, it's increased!?

1110 Strength, 1000 is from a chaste holy elemental girl, Celica, and for the remaining 110, 100 is from a chaste girl who is not of light elemental Minya, and the old man gives 10.

Umu, do it. Respect me more.

For now, I'll apologize to Celica since she looks troubled.

I like Celica's smiles, I'll be at a loss if I can't protect it anymore.

I pat her head as she's crouched down.

"I'm sorry, Celica. I won't do it again."

"You're terrible.... When it's just the two of us.... More--"

The last of her words were too quiet I couldn't hear it.

And then she looks down with a red face. Her face is covered by her blond hair.

I don't really understand what's going on, but since she looks okay now, I'll let it go.

Still, Celica's face tends to become red, does she have blushing syndrome. Or is it an illness?

It'll be troubling if she collapses.

I should use the <<Complete Recovery>> magic later.

The party continues until midnight, more and more people get back to their rooms. Since Celica also looks sleepy, I ask her to go back.

Only me and the tavern old man remain.

In the unpopulated tavern. The room after the party is over seems lonely somehow.

There's no pedestrian, it's very quiet.

The wind rattles the windows sometimes.

The old man and I are sitting side by side on the counter.

Drinking while snacking on the cold Fido Grills.

I ask him about the question I have in mind.

"Still, old man. Isn't it too pompous for just passing an exam?"

"Being one of the 32 people is already splendid in itself... It was also an apology y'see."

His later words were quieter.

Apology.... In other words, he couldn't assemble the party members huh.

"It can't be helped. Unlike the usual year, they accelerated the schedule."

"I'm ashamed. I couldn't contact half of them, and the remaining ones had already been hired for large amount of money."

"Well, I probably can clear it alone...."

I wonder if I could escape the instant death trap while protecting Celica.

Moreover, I can't use Senrigan since it would make me see the inside of the stone coffin. Not being able to go straight to the maze's exit will be hard.

However, since I can use the Truth Sight, I can detect all the traps, hidden doors and treasures.

....I feel this is already cheat enough.

The old man drank the alcohol in one gulp.

"However, a promise is a promise. It's a shame for a man if he can't keep his promise. Besides, you'll have a tough time in the Tower of Trial if you don't have anyone with Thief skills."

"Do you have someone in mind?"

The old man points at himself.

"Take me."

"Wha! Old man!?"

"I was a bandit leader in the past you know."

"Hou."

"Many things happened.... I started a business here 13 years ago."

"Looks like it's related to Minya."

Minya is 13 year old.

The old man's eyes are warped in agony.

"...It was the last will of my wife.... Raise this child at somewhere decent, she asked."

"So it's like that--don't tell me, those bandits are."

A filthy unshaven face that I saw just recently flashed in my mind.

The old man gulped the alcohol and sighed.

"That's why I couldn't refuse that Gaff. He threatened he'd expose my past."

"I see. I guess you couldn't do anything about that."

The old man shook his head when I cheered him. His short hair swayed, and he drank the alcohol in one gulp. He flung the cup on the counter.

"That's wrong Keika! I was taken aback by what you said! I noticed my mistake when you told me 『do you still call yourself a father then?』 ! That's right, I'm Minya's father before this tavern's owner! I shouldn't have been afraid of losing my business, I should have fought to protect my daughter! It really opened my eyes. For the past decade, I had forgotten the most important thing cause I was desperately trying to run this shop."

"I see.... I'm glad for you."

When I agreed with him, the old man stared at me with slightly drunk eyes.

"That's why take me along. I'll definitely remove the traps."

"--Understood. I'm counting on you."

"Ou yo."

The old man pour alcohol in two cups.

We toasted without minding which started it.

CHAPTER 11

CHALLENGE! TOWER OF TRIAL

(FIRST FLOOR - FIRST PART)

The morning three days later.

Parties of heroes candidates have gathered in front of the Tower of Trial. The average party has 3-5 members.

I saw Gaff as I was looking at the other party members.

He draws closer while grinning. Disgusting.

"So you didn't run with yer' tail between yer' legs."

"Back at you."

Gaff looks down at the old man and Celica.

"What, you didn't hire some decent adventurers? A senile old fool and yer' mistress won't do at all."

Gahahaha, he's laughing while insulting.

The old man ignores him, but Celica looks angry.

I laugh Gaff off.

"Aren't your members worthless? They look fit to be in a mountain."

U, Gaff holds his breath. But he immediately smiled.

"That Maz has challenged hero exam's Tower of Trial many times. He knows everything. Do you even have an experienced one?"

Maz... if I'm not mistaken it's the archer bandit.

Did he make him challenge the exams for the sake of this day?

"No need for an experienced one. We'll break through any trials ourselves."

"Heh, I'll be enjoying yer' dying moment!"

He went back to his underlings while grinning and saying that.

--I won't forgive this guy. Don't think you can insult a God this far.

I'll quickly clear this exam and advance to the tournament.

I'm challenging the tower with a party of four.

Me, Celica, the old man, and a big man.

The big man is taller and wider than me. His whole body is wrapped in black.

Everyone has a big rucksack on their back.

Still, there sure is a lot of people in the open space around the tower. It's crowded even to the main street. Lots of jeering and cheering.

Fido Grill stalls are making a killing.

Many monitors for the broadcast are installed in various places in the city, people are waiting for the start.

By the way, of course they're doing a bet.

The old man and Celica were going to enter too, but I stopped them.

I have two reasons.

One, the odd is quite low since the facts that I came in third and had a run in with Gaff were known.

The other reason is that I don't think the thing with Lapisia will go very smoothly.

After waiting for a while, a man in the prime of his life who seems to be the examiner finally appeared on the rooftop of the Tower of Trial.

He's moving nimbly contrary to his age. A deep voice echoes.

"Future heroes who have broken through the trial of 『Wisdom』 . We will now begin the trial of 『Courage』 . Break through all five floors of this tower and reach this rooftop before the sunset. In other words, only ones who cleared the tower in 10 hours will pass the trial. --Then starting from the first, enter your door! First turn, Gaff's party."

Cheers and jeers come mixed.

Gaff enters the first door while cursing.

The second party's leader is a robust-looking warrior with broad-shoulders. His face looks dauntless. With a thief and a magician, they enter the door.

"Third, Keika's Party."

I immediately walk while letting the sleeves of my Wafuku flutter. My Geta are making rattling sounds.

People are cheering.

"Do your best, bro!" "Make it fun!" "Old man, I'll take care of Minya if ya die!"

"Shut up! I ain't giving my daughter to you!"

We entered the third door with a relatively warm cheering.

The inside is dim.

The floor is of stone pavement, the wall is made of stones too.

The passage's height and width are around 2 meter each. It's unexpectedly wide.

There's a big door at the end of the passage.

Candle lights are put on the ceiling at an interval.

I speak while looking up.

"Sure is convenient, we don't need torch or lamp."

"That is because the broadcast cannot be seen otherwise."

"Makes sense."

Celica straightens her rucksack and powerfully nods with her blond hair swaying.

"Let us advance, Keika-sama."

"Yea, old man, I'm counting on you to be the vanguard. After that it'll be me, big man and lastly Celica."

"Yes." "Alright."

We slowly advance while being careful.

I activate <<Truth Sight>> that can see through everything while walking.

Any kind of trap on the floor and wall will appear.

【Hidden Door】

"Oh? There's a hidden door this close by the entrance."

The old man turns back and replies.

"How'd you notice that. As expected of Keika."

"Can we use it?"

"There's a stair leading to the upper floor, looks like it's a maintenance facility. It can't open without specific key or magic."

"I see."

That means the stone coffin was carried to the upper floor huh.

In fact, I can't feel the unpleasant presence of that malice on this floor.

There doesn't seem to be any trap in this passage, so we continue on and open the door at the end.

The inside is a very big room.

About as big as a playing field of an elementary school. I can't see the edge as it's too dark.

There's another door inside the room. That's the only exit.

"What is this place....?"

"There's a signboard here...."

Celica points at the wall in the entrance.

Written is, 『Preliminary trial. Defeat the fake one to obtain the key. However, there is no penalty even if you defeat a real one.』

"Fake one? I don't really understand, but that means there's no problem even if we defeat them all right?"

"That seems to be the case, Keika-sama."

Celica nods, the old man replies.

"Just right for warming up."

--And.

"Nyaa", suddenly I heard a cute voice below me.

"Hm? What?"

There's a cat when I look below.

Its small and cute body is snuggling on my leg.

Its standing tail is slightly curved at the end.

The mark of affection.

"Oh my, why is there a cat in this place?"

Celica bends down and reaches out while staring at it.

There was no particular danger when I saw it with <<Truth Sight>>. It's just an ordinary cat.

"Nya~n."

The cat squints and rubs its face on Celica's white hand. Cute.

"There's no trap, nothing. I wonder if it got lost?"

Just when I was puzzled.

I suddenly heard rushing sounds from the depth of the room.

"What?"

"Nyaa!" "Nyaon!" "Nyau!"

Countless fluffy cats came flocking like a tsunami.

It was not just one or two hundred.

Several hundreds of loveliness bury the hall.

The old man's eyes are lit up and he shouts.

"C-cats! And so many!"

"So we have to kill them to find the fake one!"

"Impossible! Doing such a thing to such lovely creatures!"

"Dammit, what should--uwaa!" "Kyaa!" "Foo!"

We were swallowed up by the cats without being able to fight back.

It's impossible to do anything in this wave of fluffiness!

I saw with <<Truth Sight>>, but the ones here were all ordinary cats.

Of course it's easy to kill them since they're weak.

--However!

Our actions are broadcasted to spectators through the monitors.

Their confidence would decline toward a candidate of hero who could kill such a cute creature like this!

"Kuh! So this is what a trial of hero about!"

It's really unthinkable for a human to come up with such an inhumane plan.

Underhanded! As expected of demon king, underhanded!

I shout at the old man while pushing the waves of cats.

"Old man! Do something about this!"

"T-telling me that--hawawa."

"Old man like ya shouldn't 'hawawa'-ing!"

But, I can understand that feel.

Lovely cats on the floor are crowding us. They're also climbing our bodies. On our arms and faces.

The cats are rubbing their bodies while looking affectionate.

I'm melting.

Feel like I'll ascend to heaven even though I'm a God!

And then the old man shouts in a serious tone.

"I can't! Sorry, Keika! I love caaaats! I'd rather die than killing them! --Hawawa."

The old man closes his eyes and disappears under innumerable cats.

--We've lost a valuable man. I'll pick up your bones later.

....Well I've somehow sensed that the old man loves cat.

Her wife was a catfolk after all, and he stopped being a bandit and became a honest man in order to raise her catfolk daughter Minya.

I look at the other side. I can see a blond hair that's half buried in cats.

"Damn, I can't become a hero if this keeps up! --Celica, can you do something!"

"Nyaaa, desuyo, nyaa. ...Ha! That's right Keika-sama! I'll help you now!"

Celica who looks like she's been charmed suddenly gets up in high spirit.

She shakes off the cats that have climbed her body and swiftly pull the sword on her waist!

She's taking a pose with the rapier as if threatening.

The cats are separated once, but then their tails stand up and they snuggle on her legs.

""Nya~n""

Celica's graceful face warps as if it's going to cry.

"Ah, so many solitary cats in a group.... I'm truly sorry Keika-sama! I'm a useless woman."

With that as her last words, she's buried in the mass of jumping cats.

--Celica, killed in action.

However, Celica's words hit me.

When you think about it, it's strange for them to get attached to us all at once when we don't even have catnips.

Moreover, the cats are acting too cute. They're accurately tempting humans.

It's most likely not just some remote-control technique.

Something that knows the situation must be giving detailed instructions in this place!

I shake off the cats and activate the <<Truth Sight>> once again.

I look at the cats who are rubbing their bodies while meowing.

The cats keep climbing up my body no matter how many times I shake them off.

Damn, cute.

--Found you!

There's a lone cat with a different status.

It looks exactly like a cat and acts affectionately together with the other cats.

However, it can't deceive God's eyes, it's displayed as 【Magic Doll】 .

"Animal shaped golem huh--Haa."

I quickly draw my Tachi, and flash.

Slash!

The sound of something hard being cut echoed in the wide space.

"Niyaaaaaaa!"

The cat golem breaks while scattering gears and springs around while wailing.

The other cats stop moving.

At the next moment.

""""NYAAAA!""""

They ran away from us all at once.

The ones that remain are the old man in heaven, and Celica who's gasping with her skirt rolled up and underwear on display.

I speak while sheathing my Tachi.

"Hey, we're going."

"Wha...?"

"Huh... hyau."

The old man rubbed his eyes and stood up, Celica fixed her clothes with a red face.

I take a silver key among the scattered parts on floor.

It's the key for the next door without a doubt.

The old man and Celica come to my sides and say.

"Such powerful enemy right out of the gate.... Keika yer' awesome. Noticing a doll mixed in them. That was dangerous y'know..."

"As expected of Keika-sama. And I was in mess, I'm very sorry..."

Celica said that while straightening her disheveled blond hair.

"Well that was probably a trap to waste our time and reduce people's confidence in us. What a dungeon with disgusting personality this is."

"How horrible...."

"Alight then, let's go--let me take that key."

The old man takes the key and opens the door in the interior.

A dimly lit passage. The atmosphere is different from before.

Looking at it with Truth Sight, it's full of traps.

"From here on, it's the real deal. Let's brace ourselves and do our best."

"Ya got it!"

"Yes! Keika-sama!"

Celica smiles with her blue eyes. Her white teeth shine.

It's a comforting smile that makes you smile just looking at it.

--I have to protect this smile.

I'm going to work hard, in order to meet Celica's expectation and become a God in this world. I continue on while strongly gripping my Tachi's hilt.

CHAPTER 12

CHALLENGE! TOWER OF TRIAL

(FIRST FLOOR - LATER PART)

Our party continues treading the first floor of the Tower of Trial.

The old man who's walking ahead crouches down.

"There's a trap 'ere.This one's a trap where something will fall from above."

The old man takes out some tools from the bag on his waist.

I speak to his back.

"Strong acid will fall down if you step on the floor to the right, the center one, and the one near the left wall."

"....Stop finding them faster than the pro man. I'm losing my confident here y'know."

The old man smiled while saying that and canceled the trap.

Celica's blue eyes are filled with surprises.

"You're amazing, Keika-sama. Seeing through even traps."

The old man speaks while peeling the stone pavements off the floor.

"You're gonna be a great thief. Wanna train?"

"I'm not gonna."

I replied while smiling wryly.

We continued on for a while. While steadily canceling the traps.

After a while, we came into a slightly large room. There's a wooden box and nothing else.

However, there are human bones scattered on the floor.

I look hard at them. Status appeared.

【Status】

Name: Recovery Bone

Element: 【Earth】 【Water】

Attack: 1200

Defense: 500

Vitality: 700

Willpower: 0

【Skills】

Slash: A horizontal slash

Double Stings: Two stabbing attacks

Ray Sting: Stabbing attack that ignores defense

Recovery: Regenerate in 12 hours even if destroyed

"It's an enemy. Recovery Bone."

"What!? Such a powerful monster!?"

The old man was visibly upset.

With rattling sounds, the scattered bones are rebuilding themselves.

One blue skeleton warrior stands up. It's holding a sharp double edged sword in its hand.

Celica frowns and speaks with worry.

"Ke-Keika-sama...."

"It's alright. Just watch, Celica."

I put down the rucksack on my back and holds my Tachi in my right hand.

My Wafuku's sleeves sway, the sounds of my Geta are resounding.

The skeleton creaks and rushes in.

The sword on side--moving like it's going to slap--.

【Slash】 huh.

I make a large step and swing my Tachi matching the enemy--!

GAN!

Sounding like hitting a rock, the skeleton's wrist spurted off.

With clattering sounds, the bones and the sword fell down on the floor.

I swing down my sword at the defenseless skeleton.

GAAAN!

Hard sensation transmits on my hands.

The skeleton is split in two, from the cranium to the back bone.

Then it became blue sand and crumbled.

I sheathe my Tachi and turn back.

"Weak. Let's go ahead."

Celica's and the old man's eyes are wide open.

"Hm? What's wrong?"

"Y-y-you! Way awesome!"

"That's right, Keika-sama! Cutting down that skeleton in one slash!"

"Really? It wasn't that strong y'know."

Since we're being broadcasted and all, I tried to look like I was having a hard fight like a human would.

"Awesome. First time I saw a warrior killing a blue skeleton in an instant."

"Me too. Keika-sama is always surprising."

I scratch my head.

"Well, I was just lucky. Forget about that, let's press on."

"Y-you're right. Let us go."

Celica fixes her disheveled blond hair and pushes the big man ahead.

--And then.

The old man approaches the wooden box.

I reflexively look hard at it.

It's displayed as 【Item Box】 .

"Is that something like a treasure chest."

"Right. The clue to go up is inside."

"I see."

There are a written paper, a key and a stone inside the wooden box.

【Equation of Truth】 Release Method 1.

【Key Parts】 Triangular Part. Three are needed to reach the truth.

【Dummy Key】 The door will explode if you use it on the floor door. The user will die.

Die eh.

Could it be that this third maze has many death traps in itself.

In order to legally kill someone they're paid to.

I somehow felt that.

I speak.

"Apparently, the key is fake. The paper and the stone are needed it seems."

"You knew just by looking Keika-sama!?"

"You serious!?"

Celica and the old man were surprised.

"Well, somehow or another."

"Amazing desuwa.... As expected of the man that will become the hero."

Celica's words were filled with deep emotion.

I speak while straightening my rucksack.

"Well then, let's go."

"Ou."

"Yes, Keika-sama."

We continue on the dungeon-like passage while canceling several traps and defeating many enemy.

Sometimes we got some items in a room.

These are all we got.

【Equation of Truth】 1,2,4.

【Key Parts】 a triangular pyramid, a cylinder, and a cone.

【Dummy Keys】 explosion, ice pick, heat oil.

This really seem to be a dungeon that can definitely kill the challengers. The dummy keys' effect are all instant death.

We fought many monsters, but I defeated them easily.

According to the two, the enemy were very strong by the Tower of Trial's standard.

The old man mutters while walking in the passage.

"Looking at the many traps, and the enemy's strength, this could be.... That huh."

"Do you know something?"

"Keika, you have a bad luck. This might be the dungeon to amuse the people by showing death to them."

"Ah, I see. So that's the reason."

I nodded.

Celica knits her brow and asks with a puzzled voice.

"What were they expecting creating such passages....?"

"That y'see. It's a service and direction to amuse the viewers."

"What do you mean?"

Celica tilts her head swaying her blond hair. It looks out-of-place in the dim dungeon,
I think it's cute.

I take over.

"The people who are watching want at least one party to atrociously fail. Challengers dying is one part of the entertainment after all."

"H-how terrible! Even though the challengers are fighting with their lives to defeat the demon king--"

"I understand Celica's feeling, but it is what it is."

I pat her angry head. She bit her red lips in vexation.

And then we got to a place with tall ceiling after going left at a two way junction.

There are several round pillars.

There's an altar in the room.

With a big double door behind it.

"Looks like there's no enemy."

"Should I check it out?"

"No it's dangerous to go in. Let's take a break near this entrance."

You won't know it just by looking, but it can't deceive a God's eyes.

There are countless holes on the floor, the wall and the round pillars.

"Well then, let's rest for a bit."

Celica puts down her rucksack, and drink the water bottle on her waist. Her thin throat moves up and down.

"How many hours have we been inside?"

I asked and then the old man looked at something that resembled a compass.

"It's two hours."

"Quite long. Eight more hours huh...."

I look at the altar and the door with the <<Truth Sight>>.

The altar is made of white marble, there are a triangular, a round and a square holes on it.

There's also some candles for illumination.

【Altar】 a place to put key parts in order to continue to the next floor.

You will fall to the needle hell if you put in the wrong parts.

This is another instant death type.

I look at the door beyond. One part of the door is gridded, I can see stairs going above behind the door.

【Fake Floor Door】 a door that will definitely kill the challenger who's thinking of going up.

I reflexively laughed.

"Just how much of a shit game this is."

"Eh? Did you say something Keika-sama?Would you like some water?"

Celica offered the water bottle to me.

I sigh.

"You'll die when you go up, you'll die when you insert the key. You'll die when you go

to the next floo--hm?"

"Keika-sama?"

Leaving the water bottle in Celica's hand, I lost in thought.

--Why are the explanations of the Fake Floor Door and the Altar different?

Definitely die if you're going up?

Go to the next floor?

I suddenly realize something and raise my head.

"That means the next floor isn't above!"

Sharp glints of eyes glared in the room.

--The door with visible stairs going above behind it is a trap!

Normally you'd have thought that you must go up since the goal is on the rooftop.

And since you'd see the stairs behind the door in the room, you'd want to open it no matter what.

I unintentionally burst into laughter.

"Ahaha. The designer of this maze is evil to the core. Like he's the demon ki--"

My face turns serious.

I noticed the real reason why they're trying to kill the challengers for sure.

Not to amuse the viewers.

Not to assassinate someone they're paid to.

It's to definitely kill the superior candidate of heroes who might be able to defeat the demon king when they're still weak--.

--The designer is the demon king himself!--

My mouth warps, forming a ghastly smile.

"Enough. Going at this by the rule is just making a fool of ourselves--gimme that!"

I snatch the water bottle from Celica's graceful hand.

"Eh? Keika-sama....?"

She was trembling in fear from my sudden change.

--Sorry, Celica. This irritation won't settle for a while.

There's no need to hold back if the other party is the demon king.

"Get the luggage! We're going!"

"O-ou!"

"Y-yes Keika-sama!"

Celica and the old man grab the baggage in a hurry.

After making sure of that on the edge of my vision, I pulled my Tachi.

I pour water from the bottle on the blade!

The crest on the blade shines!

"In the name of Keika Hiko-no-Mikoto, o gentle breeze blowing in the ravine since the Age of Gods, gather into a bundle and form a gale--<<Roaring Tempest Slash>>!"

Whooooosh--!

A huge wind is released from the swung Tachi!

it goes straight to the altar while whittling down the stone pavements.

Boom, it cuts the white marble altar in half.

The countless wind blades turn into a storm, blowing violently with the altar in the center.

Swoosh swoosh!

Countless needles are shot from the wall and the floor. Thin lights that look like silver threads fill the room.

However, the tempest roars and strikes down all the needles.

--And then.

The storm calmed down.

The floor is full of glittering silver needles.

The altar has been broken into pieces, and a stairs going down is opened below it.

I look at it with Truth Sight.

【True Stairs】 the stairs to the next floor.

"It was really below huh--"

I sheathe my Tachi while muttering.

Celica's blue eyes are wide open.

"A-amazing Keika-sama.... To think there would be a stair there...."

"Keika, you can do anything can't you...."

Well, I'm a God after all.

I take my rucksack and step toward the stairs.

"Let's go."

Celica, the old man and the big man follow behind me in a hurry.

We come to the hole where the stairs are and peer below.

Dim basement. I can feel presences of something moving.

Dry wind blew up, swaying my hair.

"Be careful."

"Yes."

Celica puts her hands on her big breasts and nodded seriously. Her blond hair powerfully shakes.

"Alright, leave it to me."

The old man replied with a fearless smile on his square face.

Healed by the two's voice that were mixed with trust and respect, I went down the stairs.

CHAPTER 13

TOWER OF TRIAL ENDLESS ENCOUNTER

(SECOND FLOOR)

We went down to the second floor of the Tower of Trial. We have seven hours 50 minutes left until the sunset.

The passage is made of stones just like the first floor. Its height is unchanged at two meters, but it's wider at three meters.

However, I saw a white line on the floor when we got down and sighed in disbelief when I looked beyond it.

"What the heck is this...."

I look ahead.

Monsters are crowding together everywhere you see in the wide passage straight ahead.

【Sword Skeleton】 white skeleton that carries only a sword. It's weak but they come in groups.

【Gargoyle】 stone statue modeled after the devil. Hard.

【Skeleton Knight】 heavily armed black skeleton. Hard and quick.

【Evil Statue】 eerie stone statue modeled after the demon god. Hard and strong.

There's also some 【Recovery Bones】 .

Its strength is the same as the one in the first floor, but the regeneration time is only five minutes.

--After a carnival of instant death traps, now it's monster encounters en masse huh. The incompetent idea is seriously like a shitty game.

Rather, the designer's train of thought is transparent. He must be wanting to kill us by

all means.

However, looking with <<Truth Sight>>, there doesn't seem to be any trap.
I guess it's obvious. The monsters would have stepped on them.

As I was thinking while observing them, Celica stood up beside me after putting her bag down. Her beautiful face is braced with determination.

"Let's do our best, Keika-sama."

"Ah, of course--don't fall behind old man."

"For sure."

Celica pulls out her rapier for the first time. The blade seems rusted. However, I could see a silver blade radiating pure light under it.

The old man draws a dagger with curved tip.

I also unsheathe my Tachi. I sprinkle water from my gourd on the blade, the crest shines blue. I also pour water on the two's blades.

"--<<Wind Blade Grant>>.... let's go!"

"Yes."

"Alright."

The big man carries the baggage and follows us in silent.

I ran over the white line.

The loitering monsters are attacking like waves.

I swung the sword clad in wind blade at the crowding monsters.

Three of the monsters in the front fell victim to my Tachi, the other five behind them were hit by the wind blade, breaking into pieces.

Tremendous destructive power. Celica and the old man behind me stare wide-eyed in surprise.

However, the skeletons and the stone statues are not surprised.

They tread on their friends' bones, attacking in!

I exchange blows at a paper-thin difference against the swift sword attacks of two Skeleton Knights.

"Deyaa!"

I swing the Tachi from below to top. The skeletons broke into thousand pieces.

The gargoyle behind me also broke down.

After swinging my Tachi for about ten times more, more than 50 monsters got destroyed.

However, we haven't even advanced a tenth of the passage.

I sprinkle the gourd's water on the blade once again, the crest shines.

"Hm? Old man, isn't there a hidden door on that wall over there?"

"What.... Ah, there's one fer' sure."

"Can you check it out. I'll hold back the enemy here."

"OK."

The old man touches the wall and begins to investigate it.

I destroyed the advancing skeletons and statues one after another.

Since I couldn't move, monsters' wreckage piled up around my feet.

I'm thinking while fighting.

--I'm completely fine with this since I'm a God.

But if it were a party of a real hero, their stamina wouldn't last y'know....?

--Don't tell me!!

I shout out while swinging my Tachi.

"Old man, get back!"

"What!"

The old man quickly stood up.

Right at that moment, the hidden door opened, and a crowd of 【Sword Skeletons】 appeared.

"Damn! --<<Gale Slash>>!"

I swung my Tachi, releasing a sharp gale.

However, it couldn't reach the skeleton attacking the old man in time!

The tip of the lead skeleton shallowly cut the old man's arm.

"Kuh!"

The old man swings his dagger while frowning. It pierced the skeleton's backbone, crushing it.

However, the second skeleton attacks immediately after.

The old man can't evade it--!

"Haa!"

Filled with sharp fighting spirit, Celica's stab broke the skeleton's shoulder. The wind blade activated, blowing away its upper body. The skeleton's sword fell to the ground.

My wind blade finally arrived.

Crushing the eight skeletons that were clattering behind the hidden door before they could join the battle.

"Are you alright!?"

"Yeah, this much is nothing."

The old man said that with regret on his face.

Celica rushes up and waves her neck.

"The cut is not shallow, I'll treat you."

"Please do. Meanwhile, I'll defend you here."

"Yes."

I continued swinging my Tachi while being wary of the hidden door.

Glank, clank, sounds of broken stones and bones continue to echo in the room.

No matter how much I defeated the monsters, their number hasn't decreased.

I clicked my tongue in my mind.

--They're just sending monsters without doing anything else!

They want to decrease the stamina of the party of heroes that's excellent enough to clear the first floor.

'What do you mean' huh.

A weak party won't be able to clear the heaps of instant death traps on the first floor.

Especially the last stairs going up, they will certainly be caught up in it.

However, if a party is able to clear that, that must mean that they are a considerably sharp and able party.

Thus, the demon king stops stacking instant death traps and changes it to a method that will certainly kill the party by shaving off their stamina.

Humans will get tired if they don't get some rest, however, since there is a time limit, they can't rest even if they want to take it slow.

The next floor most likely will have battles that will whittle down physical and mental strength.

And then, when our energy and willpower have been exhausted--it's going to be a battle against Lapisia.

Normal humans will 100% lose.

A cold and cunning scenario.

"Just fine, I'll do it.... Haaa!"

I swung my Tachi and crushed the coming skeletons.

Celica and the old man come once they've done the treatment.

"We're done, Keika-sama."

"Sorry, I used the valuable medicinal herbs."

"It's fine as long as you're safe. Sorry for being a bit forceful, but we're going ahead."

"Yes."

Celica nodded swaying her blond hair.

I sprinkle water on my Tachi.

"O wind and water, abide by name--<<Gale Blade Grant>>!"

SWOOOSH, the Tachi is clad with violent wind.

After seeing that, I go forward at a quick pace.

A horizontal slash at the flock of incoming 【Skeleton Knight】 and 【Evil Statue】 !

FWOOOSH--!

Swallowing the monsters behind them, more than 10 monsters were smashed into pieces.

"Alright, we can go!"

"A-amazing, Keika-sama!"

Her straight blue eyes were filled with respect.

I took a one big step forward, swinging the Tachi, and went straight ahead the passage.

The floor was littered with so many splinters of stones and bones, hiding the stone pavement below them.

After about one hour.

We finally arrived at the end of the passage.

There was a big double door, but it wouldn't budge even though we tried to push it.

There's no mistake that it's the 【Floor Door】 , looking at it with Truth Sight.

The old man investigates the door, Celica protects him, I continue to kill the flocking enemy.

I shout at the old man in askance after defeating hundreds of monsters.

"Are you not done yet, old man!"

"Wait a minute, this door is locked with magic!"

"What!"

"Hm, there's something written beside the door... kuh, can't read them."

"Kimmerrick-san, I will read it. --Please switch with me in the meantime."

"Ou, counting on ya'."

Celica swiftly moved, and then she crouched down beside the door with her skirt spread.

The old man protects her instead.

I speak while fighting.

"Maybe I should destroy the door like I did with the altar!"

Celica stops me with a clear voice.

"You must not, Keika-sama! It's written here that 『You will fail the trial if this door is destroyed』 !"

"What! Then what should we do!?"

Looks like it's hard to read the letters, Celica twists her body while looking at the wall. Her skirt was rolled up, her white thigh could be seen.

"Umm, it's written 『Continue to defeat the monsters as much as possible to open this door. Otherwise, the door will not open.』 "

"Nothing written about how many and how long we should do that?"

"Y-yes... that's the only rule--ah but. It's written here that the counter will reset to 0 if you don't defeat the next monster after the last one within one minute."

I shout out loud while half laughing.

"S....SHITTYGAAAAAAAME!!"

Even for games, such a shitty game like this is very rare.

Filled with rage and indignation, I swung my Tachi from above with all my might. The released wind blade smashed monsters dozens of meters forward into pieces.

The monsters stop attacking for a bit.

However, I clicked my tongue when I realized my mistake.

I approach a skeleton and swing my Tachi. It broke into pieces.

I continued defeating several more. Until their number is restored.

--Damn!

If I used a big move, their number would decrease too much and the counter would reset to zero.

That said, I don't know how long it will last if I kill them one by one.

Rather, one minute huh.

We have to continue killing them without resting at all. If you were to take a rest, zero.

A party would be exhausted no matter how excellent they are.

Nothing to do with me since I'm a God though.

I laughed while crushing a stone statue.

"Fine by me. If you're going with that, I'll clear this no matter what it takes!"

However, I'd hate to follow the rule set by the demon king.

Like I'm doing it by the rule! I'll show you how I do it.

I went to in front of the nearest hidden door. I continue fighting in front of it for a while.

--Then.

The hidden door opened, about 10 Evil Statues came out.

I look inside while swinging my Tachi.

The inside of the hidden room is a square room.

There's an altar in the center, and an orb as big as a watermelon on the altar.

It's emitting eerie black magic power. That's probably the thing that produces the monsters.

Since the door is closing, I quickly chant.

"--<<Magic Power Spring>>."

I pour my magic power into the orb. The orb immediately vibrates.

I went to another door while defeating the monsters.

I poured magic power like earlier there.

After doing that with three orbs, I slowly go back to where Celica is.

Celica tilts her slender neck, looking puzzled.

"What are you doing Keika-sama!"

"You'll see soon."

Right at that time, the first hidden door opened.

DW0000--!

The passage is flooded with 【Evil Statues】 . There are 100 of them.

"Hyaa! Ke-Keika-sama!?"

Celica screamed cutely in shock. Her blue eyes went round.

I twist my lips and laugh.

"These much are just right--Ha!"

I swung my Tachi. Blade of wind rages.

However, before they were all defeated, Skeleton Knights flooded like they were a muddy stream.

Celica grasped her hands in front of her big breasts, looking worried.

"You overdid it, Keika-sama."

"This much feels nice ain't it! --Tha!"

I swung my Tachi, blowing the Skeleton Knights along with their armor, I evaded their sharp stabs and slashed again.

After about one hour.

Suddenly, a sound of gong echoed.

Along with that, the door behind us opened while creaking.

I glance at it, but there were only a stairway in the wide room. Looking with Truth Sight, there's no trap. The stairs going up are also real.

"Old man, enter with cautions!"

"Ou!"

"Celica too, don't let your guard down."

"Yes, Keika-sama."

After the old man, Celica and the big man entered, I also went in.

The three people climbed the stairs ahead.

And then, a sound of gong echoed again.

"Geh!"

The walls on both side are lifted up, and from there, countless skeletons and statues appear. There's even some tall giant-like skeletons.

Celica turns back and shouts with disheveled blond hair.

"Keika-sama, quickly!"

"Yea! I'm going!"

I flew on the stairs while swinging my Tachi.

However, some 【Gargoyles】 flies and comes attacking Celica's back.

"These guy can fly! --Kuh!"

I swing my Tachi, producing wind.

--<<Gale Slash>>!

Bwoosh, the gargoyles collectively dropped.

We run up the long stairs.

The pursuing monsters pulled back halfway through.

A big door is waiting at the end of the stairs. It's not locked with either key or magic.

That's probably the door of the third floor.

Someone sighed, "Ha~".

I ask the old man.

"How long have we been here?"

"Been four hours since we entered."

"It still took two and a half hour even though I increased them that much...."

Celica speaks anxiously while frowning her shapely eyebrows.

"We might be pressed on time if this keeps up."

"Five and a half more hour left... We have to hurry...."

I grit my teeth strongly.

And then Celica grasps my hand. Kind warmth is transmitted from her smooth palm.

"Thank you for your hard work, Keika-sama. I know that we're in hurry, but why don't we take a quick break?"

Celica spoke as if asking.

However, her concern was transmitted to me. I understood that she was worried about me during the whole duration of the battle.

I loosen my cheeks and nod.

"Let's do that. ...Celica."

"Yes?"

"Er--thank you."

"It's nothing....."

Celica blushed and laughed like a blooming flower.

My fatigue melt away just by looking that.

I heard the old man saying 'well well' but I didn't mind it.

CHAPTER 14

TOWER OF TRIAL CARRYING IT ONCE IS?

(THIRD FLOOR FIRST PART)

The third floor of the Tower of Trial. Five hours and 20 minutes remaining until sunset.

We entered the door and came into the next place.

Wind keeps on blowing. There's a huge space in front of us. It's larger than a concert hall.

However, there is no floor. Deep darkness spread everywhere. You can't see the bottom.

I tried dropping a pebble, but I couldn't hear its sound hitting the bottom.

A narrow 50 cm wide floor extends on that space.

The road is twisting like a snake until the door at the opposite bank.

There's a one-meter tall round pillar next to the door, a torch with green flame is relentlessly burning on top of the pillar. It's a so-called bonfire.

The flame is probably green because of magic.

I notice the bandage on the old man's arm and ask him.

"Is your wound alright?"

"Yea, no biggie'."

"Just in case, I'll heal you with magic."

"You can even use healing magic! Yer' way too awesome."

I ignore the surprised old man and quickly chant, <<Complete Recovery>> and <<Detoxification>>.

Celica exclaims, wow while seeing the light emitted from my palm.

"I'm sure that Keika-sama can do anything."

"Don't rely on me too much okay."

"Yes, but that means, I'll work hard to be useful."

"Then go read the letters on the bonfire pedestal while I'm healing the old man."

"I understand."

Celica turns over and heads to the bonfire while fluttering her skirt.

Celica looks back while squatting down.

"Keika-sama, it's written that 『Light the candles from the flame on the bonfire and continue onward. Otherwise, the green door will not open.』 "

"Candles?"

"There are five of them behind the bonfire's pedestal."

"Five huh.... I guess they're not spares but we have to use them all."

I step on the narrow footing in the dark space.

I put my hand on top of the open hole.

SWOOSH!

A gust of wind blew, hitting my hand, fluttering my Wafuku's sleeve.

Does it blow from the hole below? No it's sucking in via magic.

"I see. The flame will be extinguished if we don't walk on the narrow footing huh."

I'd probably get dragged down if I flew in the air.

I'm thinking.

You have no choice but to carry them while concentrating. While paying attention to your hands and feet, and of course you also have to be wary of traps and monsters too.

--To whittle down the mental strength huh. Your nerve will surely wear down with this.

Celica stands up with thick candles of around 20cm long.

"Well then Keika-sama, let us go ahead. As there are five candles here, what should we do?"

"I'll carry them all."

"Eh!? But if monsters were to attack...."

"I'll do this--<<Floating Wind>>."

Fwoosh, the candles part way from Celica's hand.

The five candles float and move toward the bonfire.

They're lit with green flame.

Celica's blue eyes open wide.

"Keika-sama, you're amazing. This is the first time I've seen a magic like this."

"Is that so. Well, I figured as much."

I basically have more God's Arts--my own created magic than normal magic.

How is that possible? --Cause I'm a God.

However, the moment I got carried away, I suddenly felt dizzy.

"Uu."

I remain firm even though my legs stagger.

Celica shouts with her clear voice.

"Keika-sama!?"

"Oy, what's wrong Keika!"

I was attacked by a sensation of losing strength of my body.

I look at the bonfire and the candle with <<Truth Sight>> at once.

【Bonfire of Green Flame】 You can go to the next floor by putting this magic flame in front of the Floor Door.

【Candle of Magic Vanish】 Keep the magic flame lit by consuming the user's magic power. The flame will become a normal flame if you release your hand or if your magic power is used up.

Tch, so it's that type!

I look at my own hand.

【Status】

Name: Keika Hiko-no-Mikoto

【Parameters】

Vitality: 614,600

Willpower: 531,204/566,600

Attack: 102,220

Defense: 143,620

Magic Attack: 184,020

Magic Defense: 42,620

My MP's decreased a whole bunch!

I had used many magic and kept using <<Truth Sight>> so it wouldn't be strange if it decreased by 10,000 but this is just too much.

I canceled <<Floating Wind>> on the candles except for one.

The candles fell on the floor. The flame on the candles that still had their flame on changed to ordinary orange colored one.

I kept staring at my status, my MP decreased again.

It became 53,0071. 1133 was consumed. 0.2% of the maximum.

Taking all the candles at once meant a decrease by 1%, 5666. No wonder it was intense.

I put it out immediately.

Celica's long blond hair flutter as she rushes up over the candles.

"Keika-sama what's the matter!?"

"These candles consume your magic power. Moreover, it's probably by ratio."

"Ratio!? Then that means, people who have large magic power will lose a lot of it?!"

"That's right.... Celica, try lighting one with the flame."

"Yes."

Celica picks up one candle with her slender fingers and heads toward the blaze on top of the bonfire.

Green flame lights up at once.

Celica's magic power is the lowest here. It's at 165.

Celica, the old man and I are staring at the candle she holds in front of her chest.

However, Celica's magic power isn't decreasing even though I'm looking at it.

It finally decreased by 1 after three minutes.

--So it's really by ratio. 0.2% of 165 is 0.33.

It was decreased by 0.2% in one minute, and after three minutes, it finally reached a number that could be observed.

I give her another order while nodding.

"Next Celica, light another candle with the flame on the candle you have in your hand."

"Eh... y-yes!"

Celica quickly understands, picks up another candle and lights it with the green flame on the first candle.

--However.

The candle that was lit from the flame of another candle had a normal orange flame.

"Flame from another candle won't be green colored huh."

"It's too bad...."

Celica looks disappointed with dropped shoulders.

The old man who was watching speaks.

"Since Keika seems to have a lot of magic power, you shouldn't use them up. There are five candles, so first Celica carries two, and one for me. Once we got to the end and came back, Celica and I will then carry one each. We oughta do a round-trip."

I look at the snake-like narrow road in the dark space.

"No we shouldn't. It looks like it'll take one hour just for a trip. We'd waste three hours if we do a round-trip."

"Then what should we do....?"

Celica looked puzzled, her blue eyes are fogged up with anxiety. Her blond hair glitter from the light of the green flame on the bonfire.

I grin and laugh.

"Of course we end this in just one trip! Like we'll waste time here!"

A dungeon that whittles down your magic power after your physical strength.

Reliably kill the prey after thoroughly weakening them.

It's truly a cunning and repulsive idea.

--Don't think I'll proceed as the demon king envisioned!

Celica's gallant face frowns.

"But how do we do that?"

"Like this."

I took a big step toward the bonfire and drew my Tachi while walking.

--<<Tempest Blade Grant>>."

The Tachi is clad in tempest. And then I hold the Tachi aloft while staring with Truth Sight.

Celica opens her red lips, dumbfounded.

"E-eeh?"

"O-oy, Keika, what're you gonna do!?"

"Deyaa!"

ZUGAA--!

The prop of the burning bonfire hit the floor.

The pulverized bonfire inclines.

I quickly sheathe my Tachi and hold the bonfire pedestal with both arms.

"It's slightly heavy."

I heave the pedestal and the bonfire which weights around several hundreds kilograms.

And then I lifted them off the floor.

Celica is surprised as she puts her hand on her mouth.

"Ke-Keika-sama! What are you going to do with that!"

"What're doing Keika! --Y-you can't be!"

I laugh after putting down the pedestal for now.

"If doing a round trip is a hassle, then I can just carry the bonfire with me. Besides, look. The flame is still green if it's carried with the pedestal."

"T-that's quite absurd..."

"Your idea ain't humane, in a good meaning. It's at God's or Devil's level y'know..."

The two gradually smile even while looking shocked.

I put down my bag and lift the bonfire on my shoulder.

"I'm going ahead, the old man should go behind me. Next is the big man. Celica will be last with the candles and my bag."

"I understand."

"Got it."

The faces of the two tighten once they've done preparing.

"Now, let's go!"

I step on the narrow road in the space while firmly carrying the bonfire on my shoulder.

CHAPTER 15

TOWER OF TRIAL TASTELESS ENIGMATIC RIDDLE (THIRD FLOOR LATER PART)

The third floor of the tower of trial.

In a dark space that's as large as a concert hall, there's a narrow twisting road around 50 cm wide.

Gaping holes are on both sides of the road.

Sometimes wind blows from below and then sucks back in.

I carefully walk step by step.

"Old man, watch the surroundings and tell me if there's anything wrong with the bonfire."

"Leave it to me."

"Celica, you're carrying a lot so be careful of your steps."

"I understand."

When I look with <<Truth Sight>>, I see traps everywhere.

【Collapsing Floor】 Collapse when stepped on.

【Spring Floor】 Bounce when stepped on, ruining balance.

I stop on the narrow road.

"Stop for a bit--<<Blue Water Seal>>"

A line of magic is drawn on the 50cm wide road. Blue inks cover the traps. All visible traps are covered by the blue inks.

The old man who saw it from behind speaks.

"Is it traps?"

"Yeah, one will collapse the floor, the other will bounce off."

"Putting them on this narrow road, what bad taste."

"They must be trying to kill us no matter what--let's go."

We keep walking on the winding road.

There were around 10 traps carefully placed. We couldn't advance as smooth.

Moreover, since there's nothing to obstruct the view, the end door is always in our views.

Yet since we couldn't reach it, it had the effect of hurrying us.

--And.

After walking about half an hour.

The winding road got to the right side of the hall. And then it turns straight to the left end of the hall. Woosh woosh, wind blow from below my arms.

I stop and squint my eyes.

Traps are installed at every several steps.

Moreover:

--The road becomes even narrower huh."

It's only around 30 centimeter wide now.

The old man speaks while frowning.

"Ain't there more traps too?"

"Yea, that's right."

Celica knits her shapely eyebrows and sighs.

"If it's like this, we have to walk while being careful of the floor."

"Right. --No, that's a good thinking Celica. Well done."

"Y-yes? Praising me that much for such...."

Celica tilts her head with a troubled expression.

I look up. At the ceiling.

Only a pitch black darkness.

However, of course I can see it. Rather, I can see its **【Status】** .

【Status】

Name: Darkness Spider

Element: 【Darkness】

Attack: 800

Defense: 100

Vitality: 1500

Willpower: 300

【Skills】

Spider's Silk: Attack by spewing silk. Decrease speed.

Spider's Net: Ensnare an enemy in a big net. Incapacitate.

Poisonous Fangs: Paralyze and Sleep effects.

Acid Liquid: Dissolve the opponent.

There's also **【Black Silk Nest】** displayed.

I grin and laugh.

"Hmph, attacking from above when we're being careful about the ground below. Only a tasteless designer would think of this."

"Eh, whaddya mean?"

"What's wrong Keika?"

I perk up my chin upward.

"There's a jet-black spider above us. A Darkness Spider."

"You kiddin' me!"

"What should we do Keika-sama?"

I chant a magic at once.

"Hold your footing everyone.... Breeze who abides by my name become raging blades
Rage on--<<Storm Blade Slash>>"

WOOOOOSH--!

A storm runs amok near the ceiling.

Blades of wind rise, dull sounds echo many times.

"KISHAAAAAA!"

The spider's death screams echo in the vast darkness.

And then its body falls while gushing bodily fluid out.

It was as big as house.

--It would have been dangerous to fight it head on on this narrow footing.

The storm calms down.

"Old man, is the bonfire on my back alright?"

"Everything's fine. Flame's still green."

"Alright, let's go."

"Ou yo."

"Yes."

We continue to walk on the narrow path while being careful of traps.

One hour after we started walking on the narrow road.

We finally arrived at the opposite bank.

The floor is about as wide as a classroom.

There are a big door and five pedestals in front of us.

The door is gridded and I can see a stairway going down behind it.

【Floor Door】 Door leading to the next floor.

【Pedestals of Green Flame】 Obtain the key by offering five candles with green flame on them.

Looks like there's no trap.

I lower the bonfire on my back.

The ground shakes.

"Good grief. Celica, light the candles and put them on the pedestals."

"Yes."

Celica took the candles from her bag, lit and put them on the pedestals one by one.

When she was finished with all five, the candles' flames on the pedestals became bigger turning into a big lump of green light.

And then, two keys appeared from within the green light.

One is wrapped in blue light, another is in red light.

Some words appeared too.

Celica immediately reads the words with her beautiful voice.

"Um, it's written that, 『Take the blue key to let only men advance, take the red key to let only women advance.』 ."

The old man twists his thick neck.

"Oy oy. What happens if the party's of men and women?"

I squint my eyes at the keys in silent.

【Dummy Men Key】 Poisonous gas will come out if used on the floor door. All party

members will die agonizing death. Magic, medicine, invalid.

"Traps even here!"

"What is it Keika?"

"It seems like poisonous gas will come out killing everyone if we use the blue key for men."

"The heck. Then the red key for women is the correct one eh."

I look at the red key.

【Dummy Women Key】 Tentacle slimes will fall down, melting only the clothes and armor, the tentacles will coil on limbs and open them wide, thoroughly playing with you. Give you pleasures until you die.

I reflexively look at Celica.

Celica was taken aback and then she covered her big breasts with her slender arms. With disheveled blond hair, she's glaring.

"J-just now, you thought of something terribly indecent, didn't you Keika-sama!"

"H-how did you know!"

"So you really did! I can at least understand what someone I like.... is thinking."

Suddenly Celica looks down with red face.

The old man poorly whistles while grinning.

"Hyu hyu, look at ya goin'."

"Y-you're mistaken, it's because I like hero-sama.... uu."

She couldn't continue her words. Her face became even redder.

I forcefully change the topic while scratching my head.

"If you use the red key, it seems tentacle slimes will fall down and they'll do many things on you till you die. Either of them is a trap."

"Hou. Both are traps huh. I checked the door just now, it's using a magic key y'know."

"Did we overlook something?"

I look at the door, the pedestals and the narrow road back.

However, nothing happened.

Celica speaks anxiously.

"What should we do....? We have done as instructed."

"Don't tell me this can't be cleared."

The old man spoke with folded arms.

I'm thinking while stroking my chin.

"There should be no problem. Although the dungeon is fully equipped to kill us, but I can assert that this wasn't made to be impossible to clear."

"Why is that Keika-sama?"

"Cause it's more fun that way. If it can't be cleared, the only fun they get is waiting for our demise. However, when the players die in confusion even though it can be cleared, the people who know the correct answer will laugh at their mistakes, multiplying the fun."

Celica creases her forehead in disgust.

"...Is there someone who would be happy with such a disgusting thing..."

"There is. This dungeon was designed by that disgusting guy. That's why there is a way to clear it."

--I won't say that it's the demon king. Since these two might shirk back.

The old man speaks with a grim face.

"But y'know, we did as we were told rite'? Light the candles and carry them to open the door or something."

"That's true.... How was it exactly written again?"

When I asked that, Celica speaks while closing her eyes with long eyelashes.

"I remember--it was written that 『Light the candles from the flame on the bonfire and continue onward. Otherwise, the green door will not open.』 ."

"Green door.... I see. That's why it's not the red or blue light--wait?"

"Keika-sama?"

I get close to the bonfire on the floor.

The green flame is relentlessly burning.

When I look closer, I can see a lump of green light.

【Floor Key】 Key to open door to the next floor.

While laughing in astonishment, I roll my sleeve and thrust my hand into the bonfire!

Celica screamed, hii.

I pull my hand and show the thing in it to the two.

"This is it."

A green key shined.

The old man screams in shock.

"It was put in that! We'd have to come and go five times if the bonfire wasn't here!"

"Really."

If we did this normally, we'd have lost magic power and time, truly a repulsive dungeon.

Celica rushes in and touches my arm with her smooth hands.

"Keika-sama, how is your injury?"

"Nah, it's fine. This is nothing--<<Complete Recovery>>."

The burn cured in an instant.

Celica's blue eyes are filled with anxious light as she looks up at me.

"It might be too late now, but please don't be too rash okay. I'll be your hands and feet."

"Fool. What'd we do if scars remain on that beautiful skin. I'm doing it."

"Uu... Keika-sama."

Not sure if Celica is happy or mortified. She's glaring while biting her red lips.

I pick up my bag and head to the door with the key.

The door made a sound when I pushed and turned the key.

I say while pushing the door.

"The biggest hints were the 『Green Door』 and what the old man said, 『What happens if the party's of men and women』."

"Failure means instant death, it ain't a joke."

"Really."

There are stairs going down inside.

When I peek down, it's dim with little light.

The air is strangely damp, drop of waters are running on the stone walls.

"...How long have we been inside?"

"A little over 6 hours, I'd say."

"Four more hours huh... Let's do our best on the remaining two floors."

"Ou."

"Yes, Keika-sama."

I went down the stairs while being encouraged by voices full of respect and trust.

CHAPTER 16

TOWER OF TRIAL TOWER OF TRIAL THERE ARE 11 PEOPLE! (FOURTH FLOOR)

Tower of Trial fourth floor. Three hours and 55 minutes until sunset.

We--I'm in the front, next is Celica, then the tavern's old man and lastly the big man--are walking in a two meter wide and tall passage.

The stone wall is wet with water. The moist air feels stagnant.

Since I'm a God of streamlet, I'm close to wind and water, but for some reason, the water around here feels unpleasant.

It feels like they're quiet, or rather. It seems they're already under someone else.

Nevertheless, we can't stop now.

We'll be disqualified if we can't clear the trials within four hours.

After several twists and turns, we arrived at a strange room.

It's only about 10 meter wide, but several dozens of meter long. A long and slender room.

Moreover, mirrors occupy the whole wall, ceiling and floor.

I can't see the exit.

I stare with Truth Sight.

【Mirror of Magic】 Mirror that transmits 100% of magic and magic power. It cannot be destroyed with physical attacks either.

Fumu. Looks like they're normal mirrors besides their effect.

I don't see any trap in the room.

"The mirror can transmit magic.... In other words, looks like we're going to fight against enemy good with magic."

"It stinks of traps, Keika."

"Careful with magic attacks. Hide behind my back if we fight."

"I understand."

"Ou yo."

I advance ahead carefully.

Walking while having my hand on the Tachi's grip, ready to draw it anytime.

The air is damp like usual. As if they coil around you.

And then Celica raises her voice behind me.

"Keika-sama, the entrance is."

When I turn back, the place that should have been the entrance is covered in mirrors.

"We can't go out unless we clear this trial huh. Be careful."

"Yes."

And then we continue deep into the room.

There's no exit. No door. Every direction is covered in mirror.

There's a pedestal on the back wall. A stone statue is situated on top of it.

A beautiful woman. There's butterfly-like wings on her back.

"Is that a fairy?"

"That appears to be the case."

And then suddenly, there's a voice. It sounds beautiful yet sorrowful.

"Welcome, Egg of Hero. I will be announcing the trial for you."

I pull my Tachi while watching the stone statue.

"Fine. Come at me from anywhere. Can't promise ya I'll clear it honestly tho'."

"I do not mind no matter what tactic you use. Then here is the trial. Defeat your fake companions, fetch the gem in their heart, and put it on this pedestal. You can go to the next floor if you do so."

"Fake, companions?"

Celica screams right after I muttered that.

""""Keika-sama!""""

"Celica!?"

When I look back, I see numerous swaying blond hair.

I quickly counted 11 people.

"What on earth is happening...?"

"Why am I this...."

Their looks are exactly the same. Their voices are exactly the same.

11 Celica look at each other anxiously.

That wasn't the end.

The old man also increased. There's 11 of him.

"Lots of, me....?"

"What the hell happened."

"O-oy."

I turned back at the fairy statue.

"....Don't tell me, I have to defeat these?"

"Yes, this is the trial. You have to defeat only the impostors, leaving only your companions."

I look at the 【Real Celica】. Her eyes are shaken with anxiety.

"What a sickening trial."

They probably want to mentally torture the hero by making them kill their friends.
After shaving off physical and magical strength, next is mental strength huh.
This might be traumatic for weak-hearted heroes.

And then one Celica stepped forward.

Her eyes with long eyelashes are closed as if she's braced herself.

"If it's for Keika-sama's sake, I do not regret parting with this life."

"Sorry."

I can clearly see which ones are fakes by looking at their status with Truth Sight.

The one who stepped forward is a 【Fake Celica】 .

Guess it's better than having them attack.

I stab her with my Tachi.

Dosh, a dull sensation is transmitted to me.

"Uu....!"

Fake Celica's noble face is grimacing in pain.

She spills out blood from her mouth.

"Eh?"

It felt raw, like I just stabbed a person.

I reflexively looked at her status.

It really was a 【Fake Celica】 .

She's smiling while spilling blood.

"Keika-sama, please become the hero.... I'm really glad to have met you...."

Tears flow from her pained blue eyes, she coughed blood.

"Celica--"

Tension is rushing in the mirror room.

The Celicas put their hands on their mouths, their noble faces look sorrowful.

The girl collapses on the floor.
Her blond hair is spread out like a fan.
The body didn't disappear.

I'm standing dumbfounded.

The statue speaks.

"What are you doing. Quickly scoop out the gem in her heart and put it on the pedestal."

"What! You mean I have to dissect her!"

Celicas and the old men are shaken.

Even the real Celica is frightened.

--This is.... Keeping at this means doing as they want me to do....!

I sit down where I am.

"All of you, sit down along the wall apart from each other."

Celica and the old men moved as I ordered.

I'm lost in thought.

This isn't only going to whittle the hero's heart, it's also going to destroy the companions' trust on the hero.

Even if this is just a trial, could you still trust a hero who indiscreetly kills someone who looks exactly like you?

Moreover, in order to scoop out the gems, the hero has to dissect the body in front of the real one.

And for 10 bodies.

Even if they're companions who have fought together, and even if they believed in the hero, 『But he's doesn't have a problem killing his friends for the sake of trial』 will probably get tucked in the corner of their minds.

Even if they clear this trial, their distrust toward the hero surely won't disappear.

I observe the dead fake Celica.

Its feel and presence were exactly like a human.

I could only feel relieved after seeing the status displaying 【Fake Celica】 many times.

If even I feel insecure.

I want to believe on the real Celica and old man, but they probably feel conflicted.....

They must be suffering in fear of me killing them by mistake since the impostors look really alike.

I have to clear it as soon as possible.

Still.

Just how does this magic work?

It should be hard to control this remotely.

Is there someone beyond these mirrors?

Not being able to use Senrigan is painful.

What should I do?

I look at each of the people sitting along the wall.

Celicas and the old men hardened every time our eyes met.

Even the real ones were nervous.

And then my eyes stopped at the statue.
Just whom is this statue modeled after?
I look at it hard.

【Cursed Fairy Statue】 Statue modeled after fairy. Actual size.
Cursed and sealed because she rebelled against the demon king.
Fairies don't die. They reincarnate once they lost their life.

However, I didn't overlook it. The floating status.
I flick the item status at once and look at the status.

【Status】
Name: Orphelie
Gender: Female
Race: Fairy
Class: Fairy Magician Lv 99
Vitality: 0/842
Willpower: 7249/9999

....It's as if she's living.
Its magic power has been largely consumed.
That means this statue casted the magic huh.
Suddenly, the word petrification floated in my head.
Come to think of it, it's strange for a statue to have Vitality status.
Looks like it's worth a try.

I call Celica who's looking at me anxiously.
"Celica, prepare the Ground Holy Water."
"Yes, Keika-sama."

She rummaged through the rucksack and took out a bisque bottle. She's bringing it to me with her blond hair fluttering on the back.

The holy water we bought to fight against Lapisia.

We only bought one, but this is probably the right time to use it.

And then--the other Celicas began to move after a slight pause. With a bottle on their hands.

""Keika-sama, here you go.""

"Everyone besides the first Celica, don't move!"

The Celicas stopped.

Only the real one came to my side.

"Keika-sama.... What are you going to do?"

"Wait a minute."

I take the gourd on my waist and hang it above the stone statue.

"Pure streamlet flowing through valleys Wash evils away Cleanse--<<Purification Pure Water>>."

The stone statue shines.

I check with <<Truth Sight>>.

【Fairy Statue】 Statue modeled after fairy. Actual size.

Sealed because she rebelled against the demon king.

Fairies don't die. They reincarnate once they lose their life.

--Alright, the curse has been removed.

"Now, the Ground Holy Water."

"Yes, here you go. Keika-sama."

I reach out on the bottle Celica presented. Our fingers touched then.

Her body twitched and stiffened.

"Ah...."

Her large blue eyes are moist with regret and self-loathe.

I smile and pat Celica's head. Glossy blond hair.

I gently pat it many times.

Strain loosened up from her delicate body.

"I'm sorry, Celica. Everthing's fine."

"Keika, sama..."

Celica muttered with a sweet painful voice. She doesn't separate away from me even after giving the bottle, standing right beside me with her finger gripping my Wafuku's sleeve.

Looks like she's afraid to get mixed in among the impostors again.

I open the bottle's lid and splash it on the statue.

--And then.

Yellow lights sparkle and wrap the Fairy Statue.

And then, just when the light became stronger, the statue on top of the pedestal crumbled. Long green hair spread out.

Celica is surprised.

"Eh, what on....!?"

I get close, crouch down and lift her. Since she's only wearing thin clothing, her slender limbs are visible.

However I can't feel her life energy.

"Orphelia, is it. Are you alright?"

She opens her eyes in my arms. Big eyes with jade pupils. They were out-of-this-world beautiful.

"Aah..... How many years have it been since I could talk of my own will.... To think there would be someone who could undo the demon king's curse...."

"Were you controlled?"

"Yes, that's right. My power of bewitching fog was."

--That magic was of that huh. I see.

I make my palm shine and speak.

"I'll heal you now."

She feebly shook her head.

"There is no need to. My life is eternal. Now that I'm liberated, I will reincarnate to the next generation."

"Is that so.... Do you have any wish?"

"Strong Hero-sama. Would you please defeat the demon king?"

"That's what I'm planning to do. It'll take time though."

Cause I won't be able to become a God if I don't carefully make people feel obliged to me.

Then, Orphelia smiles like she's read my mind.

"Thank you. However, you must obtain the thing hidden in the Fairy World."

"You mean I can't defeat the demon king without that?"

"Yes, it's as you've guessed."

"I see. So you went through this hell because you kept silent about that huh."

The demon king was afraid. In order to prevent something that can defeat him fall into the hero's hand.

The fairy's beautiful face clouds over.

"How many heroes have these hands killed.... My heart felt like it would break."

"That demon king probably wanted to extract information by breaking your mind."

"I'm very thankful to have met you. ...please receive my power."

"...I don't particularly need others' power."

"I beg of you. Please think of it as substitute of money offering."

"Mwu.... Alright."

I felt that there was nothing I could do to persuade her once she spoke of 『Money

Offering』 .

Thus I obediently accepted it.

Then Orphelia puts her hands on my cheeks. Cold chilly hands.

Those hands suddenly became warm. A light filled with affection.

Power flowed into me.

I look at myself with Truth Sight. There's a new skill.

【Skills】

Fairy's Blessing: Nullify Instant Death Nullify abnormal status Luck+30% Permission to move in the Fairy Boundary

She smiles.

"Please, I leave you with this world."

"I got it."

Orphelia's body is wrapped in white mist, and then disappears.

Clink, clank!

Gems fell down on the mirror floor.

When I look around, the impostors have all disappeared.

Celica mutters anxiously.

"Keika-sama, are you alright."

"I feel like taking a break. It ended quickly after all."

--And I made Celica experienced something painful.

However, Orphelia's voice echoes.

"Please hurry, Hero-sama. There's no more time."

"Hm? We should still have around three hours don't we?"

We had four hours when we arrived at this floor.

I'm sure only around one hour has passed since then.

"Time flows faster inside this mirror. It's already evening outside. There's only around an hour before sunset."

"What!"

I look at the old man. The old man takes out his clock.

"What the hell! The needle is moving like mad!"

"Kuh! Let's hurry!"

"Yes!"

We gathered the gems scattered in the mirror room.

A door appeared when we put them on the pedestal.

We enter the door.

My body felt like it was pulled upward, we got warped to the last floor.

A passage made of stones.

At the back of this dungeon, there is something releasing an ominous presence that can be felt even without looking.

I tightly grip my fist.

"Big Man, forward."

The big man steps forwards with resounding footsteps.

I take the hood that hides its head.

There's a stone golem under it.

--A countermeasure for petrification. Wonder if it'll go as planned.

"Now then, this is the last one."

"Let's do our best, Keika-sama."

Celica nods with swaying blond hair.

The old man speaks while looking at the clock.

"One hour remaining."

"Let's go."

We continue onward in the dungeon with the golem leading.

CHAPTER 17

TOWER OF TRIAL LITTLE GIRL'S ADVENT!

(FIFTH FLOOR)

The fifth floor of the Tower of Trial is filled with an ominous presence.
The presence of a God who has turned into a vengeful spirit.

We're continuing on while defeating skeletons and stone statues along the way.
I destroyed doors and walls in the way since we had no time.

We arrived at the deepest hall after about 30 minutes.
Width is around 20 meters, depth is around 30 meters.
It's about as wide as a large banquet hall in a hotel.
The ceiling is high, there's several stone pillars standing.

And there's a small door at the back of the room with a stone coffin in front of it.
No mistake about it, that's the 【Lapisia's Coffin】 .

"Now, Big Man, go forward."

The golem walks slowly.

The old man speaks anxiously.

"Hope it goes well."

"Golem won't get petrified. It has no life force either. It'll block the lid from opening and cover the coffin with the soil in the bag while doing that, calming down the God's wrath. It should go well."

With echoing footsteps, the golem arrived before the stone coffin.

It blocks the lid with one hand, and uses the other hand to throw the inside of its bag to it.

Brown soil falls on the coffin.

"Good, keep it up! Keep holding the lid!"

I chant a spell while running.

"My name is Keika Hiko-no-Mikoto! God of streamlet from a foreign earth! O Mother Earth God Rupersia! Appease the heart of your raging child!"

Kah!

The soil around the coffin shined.

This is, my victory!

--And.

The lid of the stone coffin is gradually opening.

"Eh!? Big Man! Hold down the lid!"

The golem curbs the lid.

I recite the appeasing prayer once again.

However, in face of that, the lid opens anyway.

Black aura blows out of the gap.

"Celica, Old man, don't look at it!"

I run back and hide behind a stone pillar on the left side. The old man hides behind a stone pillar to the right.

Celica comes to my side and takes out a mirror. It's a hand mirror made from polished magic silver.

"Please."

An image of a black arm coming out of the stone coffin is reflected in the mirror.

It'll broke if this keeps up!

"Big Man, hide behind a pillar!"

The golem slowly heads behind the nearest pillar.

Its chest was pierced by a black arm.

After a moment of silence, the golem crumbles.

A black shadow in the shape of a human stands.

The form of a woman with disheveled hair. It's emitting abominable aura.

After defeating the golem, she walks step by step.

"She's coming here."

"W-what should we do, Keika-sama."

"Why.... Why didn't the Mother Earth God didn't grant my wish...!"

Right then, a sleepy voice resounds in my head.

『someone's here?』

--Lapisia huh. It's me, I talked to you before. Keika.

『run away!』

--I can't do that. I've come here to do something about you.

『everyone will turn to stone! that's why, run!』

--Why is she turning people to stone? Is she angry because she was dug up?

『mommy is angry! to protect lapisia!』

I noticed my mistake.

--The one who's wrathful isn't Lapisia, but the mother because her hidden child was

dug out.

"Keika-sama! She's right there!"

"Tsk! More to the left."

She's coming to the left stone pillar where we are.

Right then, flame sprout on the right side.

"Come here you monster!"

The old man's shout echoed in the hall.

Looking at the mirror, the black shadow turned away while swaying her long hair.

--Nice, Old man!

I quickly call Lapisia.

--Lapisia, are you inside the coffin?

『inside the box nano.』

--Can't you get out?

『lapisia can't move.』

--You're binded by your mother's magic huh. That means it's an earth magic.

Lapisia speaks.

『lapisia wants to move....』

--What will you do after that?

『lapisia doesn't like this current mom! lapisia likes the kind mom!』

--Okay. I'll do something.

I hold the gourd in my hand. Ready to throw it out anytime.

"Celica, make some noise to the left of the entrance. I'm going to the coffin."

"I understand.... Please be careful."

"Celica too, don't overdo it."

"Yes."

Celica went to the entrance with her blond hair flowing.

I slowly went to the back of the hall from the left while checking on the mirror.

And then, sounds of someone loudly hitting a wall echoed. Celica is beating the wall with her sword's sheath.

"I'm here, monster-san!"

The black shadow stops chasing the old man and heads toward Celica.

--Now!

I jumped out of the pillar's shadow. Running straight to the coffin.

However, Celica screamed.

"Keika-sama, over there--!"

I confirm with the mirror. A black aura ran after me very vigorously.

"Damn--<<Gale Legs>>!"

Bwoosh, I became faster. In order to release Lapisia's spellbinding!

I reached the coffin's side.

I throw water out of the gourd.

"Pure brooklet who abides me! Permeate the soil Cut the rock Release the bind of earth! <<Purification-->>"

Bam!

A shock hit my head.

From the force of the hit, I was blown to one of the pillars. I broke the pillar, and crashed to the wall. The wall was roundly dented by the impact.

I fell down on the floor.

I've been sent flying by the pursuing black shadow.

"Shiiiiit.... S'long as I'm not petrified...."

I glance at my body while standing up.

【Parameters】

Vitality: 399,200/614,600

Willpower: 513,456/566,600

I got damaged for more than 200,000 just from one attack. As expected of the Mother Earth God.

A normal human would have vanished without a trace.

I'm going to escape by relying on the presence alone.

However, an abominable wall stood in front of me before I could completely stand up.

I can only look at the floor. I won't raise my face.

The shadow moves. I can sense her moving arm.

So this is the end.....

--No, this situation is preferable!

I shut my eyes and put my hand on my Tachi's grip while still crouching.

I'll make a single finishing blow in this situation while I know exactly where she is!

The black shadow attacks by using arms.

I'll finish it with a quick-draw counter when she attacks!

I recite in my mind--<<Water Blade Grant>>.

Water is more effective against earth than wind.

A critical moment.

Our distance shortens.

She moves--.

"HAA!"

One slash!

ZAAN!

An image of blue light making an arc.

The sensation of deeply cutting flesh.

However, it seemed she evaded, I couldn't finish her!

"GYAAAAA!!"

A grating cry echoed in the hall.

The black shadow swiftly comes close in anger.

--Kuh, she's too fast, I can't make her out!

I want to open my eyes to check it, but I can't do that.

However, a childish voice echoes in the hall.

"Mom, no nano!"

Dwoon!

A sound of something crashing, the nearby pillar shook.

I take out the mirror and see the image reflected in the mirror.

A little girl of around 10 year old wearing white dress has pushed down the black shadow from the back.

"mom, stop it! don't turn people to stone anymore!"

"u...uga...la pi sia."

"lapisia loves the kind mom nano! stop it nano!"

With her disheveled blue hair Lapisia is repressing her mother. Her big eyes are golden

colored.

"protect lapisia..... won't let kill."

"lapisia won't die! so stop it already!"

"protect.... kill hindrances...."

"mom!"

I was wondering why Lapisia was talking with baby talk, so it was because her mother was also doing that.

Or rather.

<TLN: Lapisia talks entirely in Katakana.>

I stands up with the gourd in my hand.

"Lapisia, holds down your mother."

"keika!? what are you gonna do!"

"Restoring your mother back to normal."

"really!? okay!"

When I saw that she didn't listen to her daughter, I understood that her anger was caused by a curse.

"stop....stop....!"

The black shadow struggled in the mirror.

However, the wound on her stomach is deep, she's unable to do it at full power.

Thus, even Lapisia who's a child could hold her down.

I came to their side while looking at the mirror.

I sprinkle water on the black shadow, and chant a spell.

"Pure brook flowing among the mountains Wash away the evil purify--<<Purification Spring Water>>."

The black shadow is wrapped in pure light.

"Uuuuu.....Guwaaaa.....!"

The black shadow writhe intensely.

"i-is mom alright nano....?"

Lapisia's golden eyes are looking at me anxiously.

"She's fine. Believe in me."

And then the black shadow changed into a white shadow.

She's wrapped in faint light, I can't exactly grasp her form.

Lapisia hugs the white shadow with all smile.

"mom, mom!"

"Lapisia.... I'm sorry to have left you alone."

"uun! mom was there for me! always! loves you!"

She's rubbing her childish face on her mother's chest. That face is shining like a sun.

The white shadow raises her face. A flat featureless face.

"There's no need to look at the mirror anymore. God of another world--Keika Hiko-no-Mikoto."

"Is that so. Rupersia, I cut you with all my might, are you alright?"

"Yes, somehow. As long as I don't move."

"Why did you turn into a vengeful spirit?"

"The demon king held my child hostage.... I had lost myself in anger."

"So he made use of a mother's love."

"I'm ashamed.... By the way."

"Nn?"

"Please take care of this child."

Lapisia raised her face. Her long blue hair spreads out.

"mom!? why nano!? are you going somewhere!?"

The mother reaches out and gently pats her child's head.

"I have to sleep for a while since I had been awake all this time, Lapisia."

"then lapisia will sleep together!"

The mother shakes her head. The white aura shook.

"You've already slept a lot haven't you? I can't sleep if Lapisia also sleeps, so stay awake okay?"

"it's bad if mom doesn't sleep?"

I speak.

"Lapisia, your mom will turn into vengeful spirit again if you won't let her sleep you know."

--Either of the earth Gods probably has to sleep as their duty as the Mother Earth God.

'Uu', tears accumulated on her golden eyes, she shook her head buzzingly. The blue hair furiously fluttered about.

"lapisia doesn't want that! --okay! lapisia will work hard!"

"You're a good child, Lapisia. Now then, Keika Hiko-no-Mikoto. Please take care of my child."

"I accept thy wish.... Well, as far as I can."

"That's quite enough, thank you. Then, Lapisia. Listen to this person, and be a good child okay.... And help him."

"un! will help keika!"

And then the white shadow dimly shook and disappeared by sinking into the ground.

Lapisia keeps patting the floor where her mother went.

"mom's gone...."

"Now, let's go Lapisia."

When I held out my hand, she tightly caught it.

"keika thank you for saving mom!"

"Ow ow, you grip it too strongly."

"lapisia, work hard!"

Determination glitters in her childish face.

And then, I heard a voice from behind a stone pillar.

"Is it fine now?"

"Yea, it's fine. Everything's over."

With fluttering blond hair, Celica approached while carrying the bag.

She looks downward at Lapisia who's joining hands with me.

"Is this person Lapisia-sama?"

"aunty, who?"

"Aunt...! I'm Celica! Call me onee-san okay."

"granny!!"

"What'd you say!"

Celica and Lapisia began to quarrel.

I sigh and warn her.

"Hey Lapisia! You mustn't make fun of people. And you're older than her anyway."

'Muu', Lapisia's soft cheeks swelled.

"lapisia loves keika! celica also loves keika! battle!"

"You can't. Get along with her."

'Bufuu', Lapisia seems dissatisfied but it looks like she understands as she goes silent.

Celica grasps my open hand.

"Even so. As expected of Keika-sama. ...I thought we were done for at that time."

Celica looks at the broken pillar and the dented wall.

"That was dangerous. As expected of a blow of God."

"And Keika-sama who won over that is wonderful."

"I wonder...."

--To be honest, I underestimated the hero's exam. To think the demon king was involved in the very exam itself.

Who was it that failed in Japan because he was conceited in being a God.
I have to be more careful until I'm qualified as a hero.

The old man came.

"Sorry to break it to you now. We're running out of time."

"How much we have left?"

"Seven minutes."

"This is bad! Let's hurry."

We went to the floor door.

The old man speaks while crouching.

"It only needs a key. I'm opening it."

With a rusty sound, the door opened.

A passage spreads out beyond the door.

There's a familiar looking iron door at the end. That's the outer wall's door of the tower.

"Hm, before that it'd be bad if they saw Lapisia. Put on the golem's robe to hide your figure."

"okay!"

She wears the robe from the above, covering her white dress.

The old man speaks.

"But wasn't it broadcasted?"

"With the possibility of anyone watching turning into stone, I don't think they would broadcast it."

"I see."

"Then, let's go."

We passed through the passage.

Right at that time, I felt like I heard Rupersia's voice.

『Please take care of the world.』

The people in this world asked too much.

I'm only doing this for myself.

Then I felt like I heard Rupersia's chuckle.

We opened the door, the evening red sky jumped into our view.

CHAPTER 18

END AND LAPISIA'S STUDY

Royal capital at dusk. The townscape is dyed in red sunlight.

We're standing on the second floor of the Tower of Trial.

Spectators filling the public park-like square are raising their voices.

"Oy, look at that!"

"That guy's alive!"

"The old man too!"

"Awesome! I win big!"

They were very lively even though it was just us clearing the trial.

Celica smiles and whispers on my ears with her red lips.

"Now, Keika-sama. Please go to the top."

"Yea."

I climbed the stairs and went out to the tower's roof.

One inspector and seven hero candidates are standing there.

Gaff looks like he's just seen a ghost, his mouth is flapping and closing like a goldfish.

"A, y-you..."

I look at Gaff while walking toward the examiner.

"Yo. Your face looks stupid like always."

"Uu! ...keh! This great me'll crush you easy!"

"Looking forward to it."

Smirk, I made a ghastly smile.

Most of the hardships we went through in the Tower of Trial is because of this guy.

I have no intention of forgiving him.

The examiner says.

"Three minute remaining. Barely made it. We recognize that Hero Candidate Keika has successfully cleared the trial of 『Courage』."

OOOOO!

For some reason we were congratulated with a grand shout of joy. But only from about half of the people.

"A sudden favorite card."

"That was interesting!"

"I win big!"

I could hear voices as such.

And then the sun sets in the western horizon.

The examiner speaks hazily.

"We will be announcing the result of the trial of 『Courage』 ! There are eight people who've passed. The tournament will commence in one week, the matches will be for number 1 and 8, number 2 and 7, number 3 and 6, number 4 and 5, the winner will advance to the next match. That is all, give a grand applause for the hero candidates!"

A thunderous applause and shouts of joy.

My first opponent is number 1.

Searching for it, it was Gaff.

Then we went down another stairway on the tower's outer wall.

I met an underling of Gaff when I was going to go back to where Celica and the others were.

The man with a bow mutters when he passes me.

"Thank you."

"Hm?"

I turned around but he averted away.

I went down the tower with Celica and the others.

And then, Minya came pushing her way through the crowd and rushed here with her tail standing up.

She was running toward her father, but then she changed her course when she saw me and jumped.

"Keika-oniichan....!"

"Oy oy, what's wrong. I'm fine y'see?"

And then a male spectator tells me.

"Your broadcast was gone halfway through."

"Really!?"

"We thought you'd all died."

"I see, no wonder Minya was worried."

"Onii-chan.... Good."

While patting the head of Minya who's tightly hugging me with her slender body, I ask the man.

"By the way, since when was it gone?"

"Think it was around second floor? And then people began to bet whether you lived or died, it got so big."

I see. Thus since we made it just barely, the people who won the bet celebrated grandly.

The old man speaks.

"Look now, Minya. Keika is fine and all, but at this situation, your dad is--"

"Dad, safe."

The old man who was cut with two words was sunk.

Celica comes to my side. Joining hands with Lapisia who's completely covered in a robe.

"Now then, let's go and take some rest."

"Right. Celebration can wait for tomorrow. I'm tired after all. Let's eat somewhere and go back."

Minya's cat ears stand straight hearing that. She raises her face while still hugging me.

"I made.... meals."

"Oh thank you. Then, let's go back."

"Yes."

We went to the inn with Minya along.

The congratulations from the townspeople made me feel embarrassed.

"Yer' awesome!", "Keep it up!", "Get me win big too next time!"

I waved my hand at them while smiling wryly.

We had a modest dinner in the inn.

The soup and chicken skewers Minya made were a bit cold, but they were good.

Afterward I went back to the room.

Celica and Lapisia are inside. Lapisia's blue hair was long enough to touch the floor, but since she didn't want to cut it, it got styled into twintail with strings.

She's turning on the floor like she's dancing. It seems she finds moving the long twin tail around interesting.

I speak to Celica who's sitting on the bed beside me.

"First, Celica, teach Lapisia about manners of speaking."

"Yes, I understand."

However, Lapisia swings her fists.

"lapisia dont wanna study!"

"I've been asked by your mother to take care of you for once, so I can't exactly let you skip studying. A God being foolish is out of question after all."

"noway."

"I see. Then you can stop."

Lapisia looks puzzled blankly.

"i can?"

"Yes of course. But when your mom woke up, she might turn into a vengeful spirit again because of disappointment."

"N0000!! lapisia'll study!"

Her wide-open golden eyes are moist with tears, she's begun to shiver.

--I did something a bit bad. Looks like it's quite a trauma for her.

And then Celica extends her hand and pats Lapisia's trembling head.

"Lapisia-chan, you won't like it if you think of it as studying."

"really?"

"Learn how to behave, how to conduct yourself, and acquire knowledge in order to become a wonderful lady. Then everyone will praise you. Your mother will be very happy when you meet her. Don't you want to be praised by your mother?"

"i wanna.... keika loves a wonderful lady?"

"Yea, of course I do. That's why I love Celica."

Celica's face redden as if it catches fire.

"Th-then, I'll be a wonderful lady."

"lapisia will! surpass celica!"

"Do your best."

The two began to study about language at the desk.

Good grief.

After all is said and done, Celica is a former princess. She's probably the perfect being for a wonderful lady.

In fact, there are times when I'm admiring her carriage and speech.

I truly think leaving it to her will be fine.

"Then I'll go see the old man for a bit."

"Yes, see you."

"seeya, nano."

I left the room and went to the first floor.

Today is temporarily closed.

The old man is sitting on the counter, drinking some liquor.

"Wanna drink?"

"I'll leave it for later. I still have some business."

"S'that so. Then, your business with me?"

"I want to consult about Lapisia. People will find it suspicious if there's suddenly a child with us. I'd like for her to be set as an old man's relative I've taken charge of."

"No sweat. Everything's ok for Keika."

"Sorry bout that. I'm grateful."

"Ou, leave it to me."

"Then I'll be going to take care of one more business."

"Dunno what it is, but careful there."

I left the counter and went out.

Late at night.

A townscape where lights on the houses have gone out. There is not even a shadow on the stone pavement.

The streetlights are turning on one by one.

I turn at the darkness and declares.

"Come out. You've been there since a while ago right."

"So you noticed.... As expected."

The one who appeared from the darkness is a young male bandit. One of Gaff's underlings. He has a bow and arrows in his hands.

I speak with my hand on the Tachi on my waist.

"Since you had no chance of winning in the tournament, are you thinking of doing a surprise attack from darkness?"

"Nope. I've come of my own will. I wanted to talk with you."

"I have nothing to talk with you."

"First, I'd like to offer my gratitude. Thank you for saving my little sister."

"Little sister?"

The man shook when I asked that. Fwoosh, transparent wings appeared on his back.

"You must be familiar with these."

"....That fairy huh."

"I knew that she was locked up in the Tower of Trial so I was looking for her. But, I was never able to meet her."

"I see. That's why you challenged it for many times."

He shuts his wings.

"How was my little sister?"

"Ah, she wished for the world's peace until the end. Then she got reincarnated."

"I see... thank you."

The man bows.

"Is that the only reason you wanted to meet me?"

"Nope. Call my name if you have anything to do related with fairies. I will cooperate with you even if I need to exchange my life. My name is Majiria. If you have the Fairy's Blessing, then call my name through the skill."

"I got it. Anything else?"

"....Gaff will use an underhanded tactic. He's probably going to take a hostage."

"I see. Seems to match with what he'll think."

"You'd better shelter women and children in a safe place."

I speak while stroking my chin.

"No.... Rather, induce them to take Celica hostage on the audience seat."

"....Isn't she with you?"

"Exactly because of that."

It'll be troublesome if I miss this opportunity.

Once I've become a hero, I'll be allowed to execute on my discretion, but that's not the case for now.

That's why I'll be arranging a situation where it's a legit self-defense.

The man sighs while shaking his head.

"I don't know what you're thinking, but I'll cooperate--then I'll be going."

"Ah, one more thing. Why did you become a bandit?"

"This bow originally belongs to fairies. I couldn't get it back alone, so I joined a group and waited for my chance. That's all. I'd like to tell you one thing, I've never killed anyone ever since I became a bandit."

"Is that right. I don't care either way. --See ya."

"Aa, see you again. Do your best."

I parted ways with Majiria and went back to the inn.

When I enter the room, Lapisia is already sleeping in the big bed. She's sprawling with

her slender limbs spread out. Sleeping peacefully.

I stare Celica with a blaming look.

"How about the studying?"

"I-It's not what you think, we're done with today's share."

"Ha?"

"Lapisia-chan is very smart, she's quickly learned them you see."

"Hou."

No matter how you look at it, there's no way she's that smart.... I turn at Lapisia while thinking that.

Come to think of it I haven't seen her with <<Truth Sight>> yet.

Lapisia's status appears.

【Status】

Name: Lapisia

Gender: Female

Age: 257

Race: Half-God

Job: Mother Earth God Lv 1

Class: Healer God Art User

Element: 【Good Harvest】 【Radiant Soil】 【Sacred Ground】

【Parameter】

Strength: 30,000 (+0) Growth Limit ∞

Agility: 20,000 (+0) Growth Limit ∞

Magic: 100,000 (+0) Growth Limit ∞

Wisdom: 40,000 (+0) Growth Limit ∞

Luck: 999 (+0) Growth Limit ∞

Believer: 0

Vitality: 250,000

Willpower: 70,000

Attack: 30,000

Defense: 30,000

Magic Attack: 100,000

Magic Defense: 40,000

【Equipment】

Weapon: None

Armor: 【Silver Dress】 A dress filled with motherly love Defense X 1.5 【Nullify All Abnormal States】 【Recovery with Elapsed Time】

Accessory: Ring of the Earth

What is this!

She's weaker than me but.... Why does a God have level!

You mean this is a combination of the basic attribute values of a God and human's level up.

She quickly finished her study because her wisdom is 40,000.

If this keeps, she's going to be stronger than me.... tohoho.

I was about to drop my shoulders but then it hit me.

....Hm? But since she's half-human, could it be....!?

I look at my own hand.

【Status】

Name: Keika Hiko-no-Mikoto

Gender: Male

Age: ?

Race: Myriad Gods

Job: God

Class: Master Swordsman God Monk

Element: 【Noble Wind】 【Clear Stream】 【Faint Gleam】

【Parameter】

Strength: 81,210 (+31,210)

Agility: 91,910 (+21,910)

Magic Attack: 192,110 (+102,110)

Wisdom: 61,410 (+41,410)

Believer: 5

Woo!! Lapisia's attribute values are added rawly on mine!!

Well, normally Gods don't believe on other Gods even if they're together.

In other words, if Lapisia grows, I will also get stronger.

Her attributes look like it'll increase by 10,000-20,000 at each level up.

....But this is the first time I've seen Lv on Job instead of Class, I wonder how is the growth rate.

Well, let's go at it steadily.

Celica anxiously calls me who's smirking while looking at my own hand.

"Umm, Keika-sama...? Do you mind if we rest now?"

"Right, wait, the bed's been taken. Should we sleep in another room?"

"Hyaa.... But I'm sure nothing will happen. I don't mind where we sleep."

"Is that so. Then let's stay in this room."

I get close to the bed and put the sprawling sleeping Lapisia to the side.

And then I make space for two people.

I lie in the middle.

"Let's sleep."

"Uu.... It's closer than usual."

"There's no helping it. Lapisia is sleeping and all."

"Y-yes."

Celica was fidgeting, but then she went to my side after taking her armor and tunic off.

Rather, it's really close.

When our faces meet, our breathes intersect. Looking at her blue eyes this close, her eyelashes are really long.

"Then, good night."

"Good night, Keika-sama."

After saying that, Celica presses her face on my body. I could smell flower-like fragrance from her blond hair.

"Celica?"

"Zzzzz."

"Don't say that out loud."

"Fuhn, zzzz."

An angry and spoiled voice. Since it was somehow cute, I hugged her body tightly. Sensation of soft breasts pressing.

And then, Celica's body bounds in surprise.

"Hyaa."

Right after she shouted, her body went listless.

I don't really understand, but it seem she's sleeping.

Since I've also piled up fatigue today, I sleep in this state.

CHAPTER 19

PREPARATION FOR THE FIGHT

The next day after the second exam.

I went to an armor shop with Celica.

As expected of a shop in the royal capital, the collection is abundant.

Celica speaks while looking at the store interior.

"But this is surprising. To think Keika-sama is buying armor."

"It's not like I'm the one who will use it."

"Eh?"

The armor is for the trap. Having multiple traps is better.

"Well, I'm counting on you with the payment."

"I-I understand."

Celica's graceful fingers tightly grasp her purse. It's become quite thin since we met.

I've completely become a leech right now.

I'm going to make her live leisurely once I've become a hero.

A fat shopkeeper who seems to be the owner comes talking to me.

"Well, well if it isn't Keika-san. Thank you for yesterday."

"Yesterday?"

"I was betting that you were live."

"Good for you. Profit on me from now on too."

"Well then, what are you looking for?"

"A shield or a helmet, the cheaper the better."

"You're not looking for armor?"

He's staring at my body that's only wearing a Wafuku.

"I don't need one right now. I'll patronize you once I've become a hero."

"Cheap helmet or shield is it. How about this?"

The shopkeeper took out an iron helmet. It's a tacked-on helmet.

I stare at the item.

【Tacked-on Iron Helmet】 The helmet looks sturdy because it's tacked, however since it uses little iron in its creation, it breaks easily. Def+15.

I glare at the old man shopkeeper.

"The iron is so thin, it breaks easily. Are you really doing business with that thinking?"

"Eh, no.... Ah, I've made a mistakeahaha."

The shopkeeper wipes his sweat.

He starts to look for other products.

I call at his back.

"Do you have a helmet with gaudier decorations."

"How much is your budget?"

"As cheap as possible."

"Then how about this mask?"

An iron mask that covers the whole face. It's strapped with a belt. The ear decoration looks gaudy.

【Mask of Kanato】 The mask part of a helmet made by the famous craftsman Kanato. Obscures vision. Def+20 Agi-5.

...I see. It's only a part of a whole. Looks like I can use this to haggle hard.

The shopkeeper puts out a forced smile.

"This is quite an article by a famous craftsman, you can expect a considerable defensive power."

"It looks hard to see with that, don't think you can make moment judgments if you equip the mask."

"As expected of Keika-san. Very well, I will give a discount to 3 big gold coins, how about it?"

Charging 300,000 yen for an incomplete item, there's a limit to ripping-off.

The whole Helmet of Kanato seems to be worth 500,000-1,000,000 yen though.

"Even though it doesn't have the whole helmet?"

"W-why does a vagabond like you know that....!"

"I'm disappointed in you. I said that I'd patronize you once I became a hero. None of that now."

"N-no way! I'll halve the price. 1,5 big gold coins, how about it?"

"3 small gold coins it is." (about 15,000 yen)

"That's too cheap! My business will--"

"Even though you're selling junk products that are originally unsellable?"

"Guh...!"

"Once I become a hero and meet the king, I'll report about a shop in the royal capital's main street that's selling junks. From what I see, it seems there are weapons of soldiers too, do you have a license to do business?"

"Y-you said that, but are you really definitely going to become a hero!?"

"You don't need to sell it to me if you're not going to bet one me becoming a hero. This thing is 2 small gold coins if you're going to curry my favor."

"Uwaaa! This man haggled it down even more! Are you a devil! --ey, just take it! Take it for 2 small gold coins!"

The shopkeeper's face distorted and he wept.

I laugh.

"OK. Deal. Celica, please pay him."

"I understand.... Um, mister.... Please take heart."

"Uuu.... What kind words.... You're my only ally, young lady."

While crying, the shopkeeper takes the payment from Celica and tries to grasp her hands.

I catch Celica's slender shoulder and pull her back. The soft blond hair spread. She leans on me even while blushing.

He was trying to touch Celica during the confusion, like I'd let those dirty hands do that.

"There's no need for sympathy Celica. He probably thought, 'I can't sell this without the whole part. Since I always get good profit anyway, I'll take this much' during the transaction anyway, I should have been able to purchase it even at 1 small gold coin." The shopkeeper opens his mouth in shock. Looks like he can't retort anymore.

While still being hugged, Celica looks up and asks me at point blank while looking like she finds it unbelievable..

"....To see through that much.... Did Keika-sama possibly operate a business back home?"

"Nope. I just knew it somehow."

"You're amazing, Keika-sama."

"See ya old man. I'll come again."

I took Celica out with me.

Afterward, we returned to our room in the inn.

I immediately prepared a writing brush and paint and painted the mask. I'm creating a black pattern.

While swaying her twintail, Lapisia is staring with curious eyes at me working.

Celica's blue eyes get rounded as she looks puzzled.

"Keika-sama, what are you working at?"

"Nn, I'm thinking of setting up a trap."

"Trap is it?"

"Alright, this pattern should do it."

Lapisia is filled with disgust like she's looking at a roach. Staring at the mask while furrowing a cute wrinkle on her forehead.

"hate that!"

"As I thought you understand Lapisia.... Don't ever equip it okay."

"un got it!"

I chant a spell before the paint dries.

"By the name of Keika Hiko-no-Mikoto Stagnant water of lamenting thought Windless of bitter thought Burn and go mad with furious resentment--<<Curse Thought Grant>>."

The iron mask's pattern moves like a snake as the curse is attaching itself.

The mask is now releasing a blue ominous aura.

Putting curses on equipment is a simple matter cause I'm a God.

【Mask of Rage】 A mask with a curse put by a God of another world. Drastically raise all attributes. However, the mask cannot be removed, and impulse to destroy cannot be controlled.

Lapisia who saw it screamed, 'Hiii', and jumped into the bed.

"hate! hate curse!"

She covers her whole body from head to toe with a blanket and shivers. The golden eyes peeking from the gap are moist. Looks it hit her trauma.

I wrap the mask in cloth and hide it.

I stand up and head outside the room.

"Then I'll be handing this mask for a bit."

"To whom will it be?"

"You'll know soon. More importantly, Lapisia and Celica, protect each other. Understand?"

"Yes, Keika-sama."

"S-s-see you, nano!"

Lapisia who said good bye even while being frightened was too cute my cheeks loosened.

A few days later.

I looked down at the night town.

Townscape inside the darkness.

I watched one tavern below closely.

I execute <<Senrigan>> and <<Great Eavesdropping>>.

Gaff and his underlings are having a talk in one corner of the tavern.

"So we watched them for several days now, Minya or Celica, which one's good for a hostage?"

"Should be Minya cos' she goes out alone rite'."

One of the underlings answered, but Majiria who has become my underling reacts.

"But y'know aniki. It won't be a hostage if they ain't close y'see? I mean, for him, she might be nothing more but an inn daughter right?"

"Yer' right. Guess it's gonna be the blondie...."

"But she's usually with someone ain't she? Either that man or that blue hair midget."

"That Lapisia brat or something huh. They said she's the old man's relative, but she got some sharp intuition and very quick to yell."

Majiria says.

"Won't the blondie be alone during the tournament? The kid ain't coming."

"Even if there's someone, it's just gonna be the inn's old fool anyway huh.... We also have two people here, just attack 'em in the spectator seats then."

"We can show it to tat' guy too with it."

"And then, aniki just gonna hafta' beat him like splat when he can do nothing."

Gaff smirks.

"Kukuku, looks like that's the most effective. But well, he's not gonna be with her

during the day, so we can just attack her in the inn if she's there."

"We're gonna enjoy that woman, aniki awesome!"

"We've also got that special thing too, there's nothing aniki is 'fraid too now!"

Gahaha, the bandits laugh loudly.

I left the roof.

--Looks like Majiria has successfully goaded them to aim at Celica.

Next is the place and method.

The arena at night.

The spectators seats with stairways surround the elliptical arena.

There's no one here.

I confirm the arena's entrances and seats while walking carefully.

And then I choose the place where Celica will be attacked.

There is a 3-story tall VIP seating in the center of the ellipse. It looks like a tower. The king and nobles are probably going to watch from this.

Since it's made of stones and pillar, the seats right below it are cramped. Moreover, it's easy to become a blind spot from other spectators.

--Here it is.

I went back to the inn.

The tavern has already been closed.

Minya is skilfully moving her slender arms in the kitchen, doing something. I wonder if it's a training for tomorrow.

"Minya, I'd like to ask you one thing."

"What... Keika."

"Could you buy some Rubera fruits?"

"Nn, okay."

Her big black eyes are looking at me. She's expressionless like usual, but her tail is swinging.

It seems like she wants to say something.

I speak while entering the kitchen.

"Anything I can help?"

"It's fine... more importantly."

"Hm?"

"Once Keika became a hero.... leave?"

"I will."

"I see...."

Minya returned to her training again. But her tail is lowered.

But then, her ears suddenly moved.

"Long journey.... Who'll make you meals?"

If we're going on a long journey, it'll be me, Celica, and Lapisia.

I reply with furrowed brows.

"Either me or Celica."

"I see."

She's working expressionlessly.

However, her black tail is coiling on her leg happily.

I don't really understand, but as long as she's having fun.

"Then I'm gonna sleep. Good night."

"Good night."

I went back to my room after parting with Minya.

I bumped into a white lump the moment I entered the room.

The twintail blue hair shook intensely.

"Keika! Welcome back! Love!"

"What is this Lapisia. You haven't slept."

"Sleep together!"

She hugs me tightly. The shape of her delicate limbs are transmitted from the thin dress. It made me think that a child's body temperature sure is high.

Her pronunciations have been getting better in just a few days. It'll be perfect once her baby talks disappear.

Celica who's changed into a thin nightdress sighs tiredly.

"She kept complaining that she couldn't sleep without seeing Keika-sama first...."

"I had to go out today.... Can't be helped, let's sleep."

"Un! Make children!"

"Fool. You're a child yourself."

"Buu."

Lapisia's swollen cheeks swell even further.

I lift Lapisia who's hugging me, and we got on the bed to sleep together.

Then for some reason Celica snuggles with her breasts pressing my back.

Soft roundness and fast beating are transmitted from her light clothing.

"....Celica."

"What is the matter Keika-sama."

"Haven't you gotten strangely bold ever since Lapisia came?"

"Feh.... T-that's not true! I've always been like this!"

While saying that, she hugged me even harder from behind. Her sweet breath tickles my neck.

Lapisia who's hugging me raises her face while swaying her blue hair.

"Liar! Liar!"

"Hey, what are you saying!"

Lapisia puts out her small tongue at the upset Celica.

I moved my body while sighing.

I hug both Celica and Lapisia with both arms.

"Haven't I told you. You have to get along."

"Yes, I'm sorry.... But I don't want to lose."

"Lapisia will beat onee-chan!"

"Ha.... there, there."

I could do nothing but sighing and patting their heads to calm them.

To be honest, Lapisia who's flat sticking close to me feels hot.

Celica's softness feels gentler to me.

I speak to Celica whose blue eyes seem sad.

"Oh right, before that. Celica."

"Y-yes."

"You're coming to watch the tournament aren't you?"

"Yes, I will be going."

"Can you go alone? At the elliptical center of the arena, below the VIP seating."

"Yes? I do not mind."

"You'll be attacked there, don't resist."

"Eh!? Just what is--"

And then Lapisia sulks.

"Lapisia will go too!"

"I want to ask Lapisia to do other things."

"U? What?"

"Minya might be attacked in the tournament day. That's why please stay on her side and protect her."

--It's a preparation for the worst case scenario where they change target of hostage.

Lapisia's brows cutely furrowed.

"Mwuu..."

"Or do you not like Minya?"

"Lapisia likes Minya!"

Lapisia's golden eyes dazzled as she smiled.

"Is that so. Then protect her. But you can't hit the bad guys with all your power okay."

Because it'd be a beating to death for sure with Lapisia's power.

"Got it! Will hold back!"

I pat and rustle her blue hair.

"Un, good kid. Celica, I'll explain about it later. It'll go well, believe me."

"I understand Keika-sama. I believe in you with all my heart."

Celica snuggled as she said that.

Looks like it'll be another hot sleepless night today.

CHAPTER 20

OVERWHELMING HUMILIATION AT THE TOURNAMENT

The tournament day.

Fine weather since morning.

I'm heading to the arena with Celica.

The people walking on the stone paved road are gazing at me with smiles.

I wonder what's this. I'd never experienced this from people when I was a God.

It's ticklish.

I could only return an embarrassing grin at them.

When I look at my side, Celica is smiling. Her blue eyes are filled with trusting light.

"What's wrong, Celica."

"I was just thinking that even Keika-sama has something he's weak at."

"You.... I'm just not used to it."

"Fufu."

Celica laughs like a blooming flower and then she embraces my arm tightly. I can feel her slender body line.

"O-oy. Don't stick that close in the middle of the city."

"It's fine isn't it. Fufu."

She keeps smiling like she's happy about something.

We arrived at the arena.

The arena is similar to a stadium on earth, there's an elliptical stage in the center with ascending audience seats around it.

We're parting at the entrance since they separate the entrances for the participants and the audience.

"Then I'm going."

"...Please be careful Keika-sama."

"You too Celica, watch your surroundings. Do it as planned okay."

"Yes."

Celica obediently nodded even though her shapely brows furrowed. Her blond hair is glittering from the morning light.

I nodded and went to the participant entrance.

A middle-aged man who seems to be an official approaches me immediately.

"Good morning, Keika-sama. I'll guide you to the waiting room."

"Has my opponent come?"

"Gaff-sama hasn't come yet."

"Hou, is that right."

I concentrate my ears.

--<<Great Eavesdropping>>.

Noise enters my ears. I push that aside and listen to his voice.

"Hehe, that woman really came alone. --Ya know the plan guys."

"Perfectly."

"Leave it to me."

"Then I'm going. Kukuku, I'll humiliate that bastard in front of the audience...."

Oh. He's quite vigorous.

Defeating him will be worth it.

I'll enjoy it to the utmost.

I laughed and followed after the official in the narrow stone passage.

And I was led to a small room of about 10 tatami big.

There's some chairs, table and bed inside.

After doing some light stretching, another official calls me.

"You must be Keika-sama. The first match will begin soon."

"Is that so. Please guide me."

"Over here please."

I followed after the official.

We arrived at a bright place with morning sun.

It's the elliptical arena stage with soil ground. Me and my opponent are situated furthers apart from each other.

The audience who were looking from above grandly cheered when they saw me.

I look at the opposite side.

Gaff with his filthy hairy face came walking slowly.

He's smirking showing his yellow teeth.

The host shouts like his throat's split.

"It finally begins! First match, Gaff VS Keika! It's an interesting match up, you just can't look away! Then get readyy! --Start!"

The starting gong resounded.

I walk ahead while pulling my Tachi. The sleeves of my Wafuku are fluttering.

Gaff pulls the great sword on his back even while being afraid of my actions.

The great sword glitters reflecting the morning sun.

I recalled that it was a famous sword.

I squint and look at him.

【Status】

Name: Gaff

Gender: Male

Age: 30

Race: Human

Job: Bandit Head

Class: Warrior Lv 34

Element: 【Fire】

【Equipment】

Weapon: Explosive Great Sword 【Robbery and Murder Item】 : Added explosive damage Low probability to cause Instant Death

Armor: Chimera Scale Armor 【Robbery and Murder Item】 : Agility improvement Weightless Floating

【Skill】

Cut: Slash with two-handed sword

Mow Down: Horizontal slash with two-handed sword

Storm Press: Swing sword from above, driving down tempest-like explosions on opponent

Press Down: Jump to the sky, driving down a powerful blow with your whole weight put on it

Accumulated Slash: Accumulate power and slash. Pulverize opponent. Double power.

Magic Judgment Slash: With the force from swinging sword, nullify direct magic attack

【Weapon Skill】

Blaze Dancing: Cause chain explosions with an attack. The opponent will run about like they're dancing

Explosive Wind: Cause small explosion, additional damage

Looks like he's not all words, he's mastered the higher skills of warrior class.

Since Gaff has come closer, I speak to him.

"You should use your secret skill asap. You can die easy without suffering that way."

"Y-You....!"

Gaff slashes at me with his face red.

A horizontal slash.

【Mow Down】 huh.

I easily evade with a back step.

He takes a big step while chasing me.

"Hmph!"

The great sword was lifted diagonally to the left, and then slashed down.

The sword is clad in wind.

Must be 【Storm Press】. Did he train to be able to use it diagonally.

I slant my Tachi and lightly flush away the powerful slash. The ground is gouged with the blast.

"What was that attack. Are you plowing a field or something?"

Gaff's face crumples with anger.

"Don't underestimate me!"

He's swinging the great sword continuously. Fwoosh, swoosh, cutting the wind.

I easily evaded them by a hair's breadth since they were just simple 【Cut】s.

Gaff is already sweating and gasping for breath.

"Dammiiiiit...."

"What, was that all your power. Hm? Hmm?"

I raise my chin and look down on him.

Then he jumps in the sky while gritting his teeth.

"Damn you!"

Jumping thrice the height of a man, blocking the sun.

--Aren't you good. So this is 【Press Down】 huh.

The great sword shines, and falls down with the wind!

A powerful blow!

I take a back step to evade and tilt my Tachi to act as a shield.

DWOON!

The stage's stone pavement cracked, raising cloud of dust. I block the flying splinters with the side of my Tachi. Clank, clink, lightly repelling them away.

Thick white smoke rises.

Gaff is stiffened with his sword below.

I didn't miss that chance.

Like fencing, I thrust my Tachi casually.

"There."

The tip bores Gaff's shoulder.

"Gwa!"

Gaff grimaces and jumps back.

"Hee, looks like even a fool has nerves on their shoulder."

"S-shiiiiit....! Y-you.....!"

"Anything else you can do? None of your skills came through right?"

After comprehending that all of his skills are useless against me, he realizes the difference in status.

Gaff looks awfully hurt from my words.

"U...!--Hm? Keke."

Gaff's warped face that looked like it was going to cry suddenly brightened.

And then he slowly swings his great sword like it's matching my Tachi. It's not a movement from 【Cut】 .

--Hmph. Looks like he wants to talk to me about something.

I slowly swing my Tachi matching his sword.

CLAANK!

Our swords hit each others.

He puts his face close to mine while we're locking swords.

"Look to the left audience seats.... Kuku."

I move only my eyes and see it.

One of Gaff's underlings is standing behind Celica in the audience seats.

He must be thrusting a dagger on her back.

Gaff speaks while exhaling his stinky breath.

"Give yourself up if you value the woman's life. I'll let you go with your life.... We're gonna thoroughly enjoy the woman later tho'!"

Gaff made a dirty laugh 'guhehe' after saying that.

I laugh with a composed face.

"So what? Look at Celica."

"Aa?"

I exchanged a significant look at Celica and winked.

And then Celica shouts out loud with her beautiful blond hair glittering from the sunlight!

"Keika-sama! Please don't mind me, I beg of you please win!"

--DOSH!

A sound like meat getting bitten resounded under the blue sky.
Red liquid immediately flow out of Celica's cute lips.
The underling behind her shouts.
"Uwaa! This woman bit her tongue....! I-It's not me! I didn't do anything!"
The underling was panicking.
Celica who's escaped from him coughs blood and falls down in front of him.
Her blond hair spread out like a fan.

I grin and laugh.
"And? Do you--give up?"
Gaff changes his countenance in surprise.
"Y-you! Don't you care about the woman!"
"Ah, right. I won't forgive you for causing this situation."
"W-what's with you! Are you a devil!"
"Hmph, that's not quite right-- I'm a God."
I lightly push my Tachi that's locking with his sword. Gaff was blown away to the back with just that.
Gaff falls on his backside in the rising cloud of dust.
Fear runs through his small eyes.

I speak while looking down on Gaff like giving a sentence from God.
"You deserve death for all the sins you've piled up. Die gallantly!"
"W-what! I didn't do anythin'!"
He spread his arms wide as if he was appealing at the audience.

However, my <<Truth Sight>> uncovers his background!
"Hou. Then let me count your sins. --first, yesterday, you attacked an old man baker, stole his money and gravely injured him."
"Wha!"

Gaff's surprised voice is met with the audience's rage.

"What!", "So you were the culprit!", "That bread was the best y'know!"

I turn into the judge of the afterlife and sentence more of his sins.

"Before that--a felony, you attacked the caravan of Biblo Firm, killed all the members and stole their freight."

""EEEEH!""

The audience were surprised.

"So it was his doing", "They said the bandits killed the people who were pleading for their life while laughing", "Didn't know he was a bandit."

Gaff shouts out flinging his saliva.

"What're you saying! He can't prove his words!"

My sentence is not over yet.

"I see, proof huh. Then, you attacked the western monastery, violated the women and children, killed the men and plundered the treasures. One of those items is the armor you're wearing. --In addition, you got close to the Blue Knight Sabin by pretending to be a merchant, gave him sleeping drug and then murdered him. The evidence is the great sword in your hand."

"Kuh....Dammiiiit....!"

Gaff gritted his teeth with bloodshot eyes.

The audience rustles.

"I thought that sword looked familiar....!", "Please! Avenge us!", "Kill the villain!", "Hand him over to the guard!"

They began to speak those words.

After counting his sins, I finally speak.

"You've killed more than 100 people who were not resisting. Even if the king pardons

you, God won't."

"Shiiiiit....!"

Gaff groaned with white bubbles coming out of his mouth.

However, the atmosphere in the arena has turned completely on my side.

"Defeat!", "Kill!", "Kill!"

Even no mercy call has begun.

Gaff shakes his big body and then raises his face with dark eyes.

"I didn't want to use this.... But you alone, I'm not gonna let you live."

"I'll return it back to you in entirety."

"Bark all you want! --This is the eeeend!"

He puts his hand on his back, taking something from around his belt.

It's a mask that emits ominous aura.

He smiles like a madman and then puts on that cursed mask.

--ZUN!!

An explosion happened with Gaff in the center.

Shaken by the strong wind, the audience screams.

"KYAAA!", "UWAAA!", "What!?"

"That guy went and put on a cursed mask!"

"Hii", "Run, run away!", "Yer' gonna get killed by the insane cursed man!"

The audience are trying to run away.

Gaff pushes his hand toward the spectator seats.

"Shut uuup!"

Intense black wind rages.

WOOOSH! Wind clad in black aura sweeps over, beating down the audience. Even the

guards fall down.

"No way!", "Someone, help!", "NOO!", "I don't wanna die!"

People's screams filled the arena.

Looks like he's pleased with the screams, Gaff walks toward me while his big body convulses.

"Ge, gehe! ...Power! Ultimate power! I can easily crush anyone!!"

His attribute values have certainly multiplied by more than 1000.

You can even say that he's equaling a God.

However I grin and laugh.

"Go on and try it."

"NGAAAAA!"

Gaff swings his great sword while shouting dirtily.

The great sword is wrapped in ominous black aura!

-- 【Storm Press】 huh.

I stand and smile like it's nothing. I'm not even trying to evade the swinging sword.

BAM--!

A dull sound resounded in the arena.

The audience held their breath while screaming 'HIII'.

The great sword directly hit my head.

However, I'm standing calmly. Not even spilling a shed of blood.

I'm looking puzzled like saying, "Did you do something", while looking at him with disdain.

The eyes under the mask are shaken by unrest, his voice is trembling.

"W-why! How could you stood this power--!"

"Are you an idiot? You think I would set the item I made to be able to kill me?"

"Wha---! Whaat--! Y-you, just who are youuu--!"

Trembling in fear, Gaff takes a step back. His knees are shaking.

I raise my Tachi overhead. Reflecting the sunlight in glimmer.

I make a cruel smile while remembering all the insults I've received so far.

"You didn't know? I said it just now didn't I? --I am....a God!"

I swing down the Tachi in one go! A trail of light surpassing speed of sound!

ZUZAAN!!

Straight line from Gaff's head to his groin!

The excessive force cuts the ground's stone pavement as well.

My Tachi is sunk in the ground.

Shiiin.....The arena fell silent.

Swoosh~, a light breeze blows.

As if blessing me.

The cursed mask falls from his face. It hit the floor twice and broke.

"Nge....nga...."

Gaff opened his eyes wide while raising some hoarse voice and then he fell down behind.

Then his fallen body splits apart.

Darkish blood gushes out like a fountain.

After a moment, UOOOOO! The arena shook like it was broken.

The audience unanimously shouts.

"You did it!", "You're the true hero!", "Keika-sama~, look at me~!", "Keika-sama, hold me!"

The women are sending hot gazes at me.

And the host loudly announces.

"The winner of the first match, Keika! The loser is this filth, Gaff! Give a grand applause to the future hero!"

Clap clap clap! Intense applause resounded like thunder.

During that, Celica stood up with her blond hair loose.

She wipes the red liquid around her mouth while smiling.

And then she took out a ruptured pouch and a hard meat from her mouth.

--It's a clot of blood made from boiled red fruits 【Rubera Fruit】 .

Celica's blue eyes are filled with determination, and then she shouts out loud.

"That man is the bandit's friend!"

"Wha, damn!"

The bandit ran away.

The audience who notices it points at him.

"That guy was together with Gaff!", "Catch him!"

"Shut uup! I'll kill ya!"

The bandit drew his sword and swung it randomly.

"Hehe, now Gaff's dead, I'll be the next boss. I'm gonna get away--gwa."

An arrow was stuck in the bandit's chest.

He opens his eyes wide as he looks down at the arrow, but then he's enraged when he

sees the arrow's shape.

"You bastard Maji....! You traito...r"

He coughed blood and fell down.

I look at the direction where the arrow was shot.

Majiria wearing robe with a bow in his hand is standing at the top of the topmost seat.

He raised his hand when he saw me, then he climbed the wall and jumped down the four-story tall arena, disappearing.

"There's one over there!", "He ran away!"

The guards ran after him. I wonder if Majiria could escape.

Well he's accomplished the job of handing the mask to Gaff anyway, after that it's whatever.

I turn back.

I greatly nod at Celica while walking back to the entrance. Praising her, you've done well.

She waves her hand happily while looking bashful.

CHAPTER 21

THE BIRTH OF HERO AND BLESSINGS

The tournament resumed after Gaff's processing was complete.
They only investigated me lightly.

However, since Gaff clearly put on a cursed mask and injured many people, I was treated not as a villain who committed a murder, but someone who disposed a monster that suddenly appeared.

Taking a precaution really was the right thing to do.
They had explained beforehand that it was no problem even if someone died in the tournament, but if one were to thoughtlessly kill someone, they would be stuck with the stigma of a murderer and get further apart from becoming a hero.

Afterward, I watched all other matches.
--The demon king might lay some kind of trap again after all.

However, none of the hero candidates was that strong.
They seemed to have trained well as humans, but they weren't a match for me.

I won the second round easily and got to the final.

My opponent in the final is a gallant good young man with beautiful blue hair.
The young man looked at me after bowing politely. A straight gaze with no impurity.
"I'm glad to meet you, Keika-san. I was charmed by your strength. I might be inadequate as your opponent, but let's have a good match."

"Ah, sure thing."

I laughed and replied.

He was that agreeable of a young man.

"Final round! Keika Vs. Leo! The winner will have the priority to become the hero!

Now, get ready--fight!"

The gong resounded with the host's signal and the match began.

Well, the battle was going completely in my favor.

However, I noticed a certain thing when I looked at his status with Truth Sight.

This Leo young man has two elements. The second one was surprisingly 【Light】 .

It seemed the sinner system didn't work on him since he had two elements.

Leo cut the distance between us in a stretch while brandishing his sword.

"This is the end, Keika-san! --HAA!"

His sword shined, and got wrapped in wind. His finisher skill, 【Holy Wind Slash】 .

"Wind, disperse."

The wind dispersed when I ordered them.

Leo's sword that got weakened lost half of its length, I evaded it.

"W-why--guh!"

I hit his stomach with the grip of my Tachi in my right hand.

Leo falls down to his knee. His sword dropped to the ground.

--Why you ask, there's no way I'm telling you that it's because I'm a god of water and winds.

Leo puts his hands on the ground while gasping for breath.

"I-I give up. This is my loss."

The host shouts.

"Oooh! After a good fight, it regrettably didn't end decisively! Candidate Leo, declared his loss! With this the final is settled at last! The winner is Keika! It's the birth of the new hero!"

WAAAA! The arena was rocked by loud cheers.

I couldn't hear what each of them said anymore.

While waving my hands at the spectators, I hold out my hand to the fallen Leo.

He grasped my hand while smiling and stood up, his blue hair swayed.

"I'm really glad to have been your opponent. Congratulations."

"Me too, it was nice to fight you."

"Hearing that makes me happy."

He laughed innocently like a kid. His white teeth shined.

--Moreover, this guy said it truthfully, not just flattery.

The term agreeable youth fits Leo perfectly.

I'm sure that it's because his second element is 【Light】 .

One of the entrances opened, and several people appeared carrying the frame of a gate.

They installed it in the center of the arena and then they went away.

It was an elegant gate with angels and dragons crests engraved on it.

The host explains.

"Now, the winner Keika-sama and the runner-up Leo-sama will have to go through the Hero <<Holy Gate>>! Only those who possess the hero's heart can pass through this gate! Leo-sama would be the hero's reserve for if anything happened to Keika-sama! He will participate in the tournament next year--Well then, first, please go on ahead Leo-sama."

Leo walks undauntedly.

He passes through the marble gate.

And then.

BZZZZT! The gate shook and let out a rasping sound.

Leo's face became pale in surprise and fret.

The host shouts.

"Ooh! Unbelievable! The gate has judged that Leo-sama is a 【Hidden Sinner】 ! How unfortunate as he was a wonderful man!"

"P-please hold on! This must be a mistake--"

However, the guards appeared in succession, they treated Leo like a criminal.

I stare and see through the details of this Holy Gate thing.

【Element Detector】 Read out people's element.

--It could even see through his second element being Light huh.

Looks like it could see through quite deep.

It'd be a bit troublesome if it saw my abilities and status.

I look at my own palm with <<Truth Sight>> and summon my status.

And then I tamper it.

--Gods of another world can freely tamper their status.

【Status】

Name: Keika [Hiko-no-Mikoto]

Gender: Man

Age: 20 [?]

Race: Human [Myriad Gods]

Job: Civilian [God]

Class: Master Swordsman Lv10 [God Monk]
Element: 【Wind】 【Water】 [Faint Gleam]

This should be fine. I had also quickly overwritten my attribute values and equipment to look normal.

The ones inside [] can only be seen by me of course.

Leo was taken away when I was overwriting my status.

The host speaks.

"Now then, it was quite a shocking development, but let's start over, the winner Keika-sama, please go under the holy gate!"

I walk through the gate leisurely.

I was walking expressionlessly, but my mind was fretting.

I passed through the gate, coming to the other side.

The arena fell silent.

The gate shined green after a while.

The host shouts.

"Ah, here it is! Keika-sama is the owner of splendid hero's heart! Congratulations! It's the birth of a new hero, Keika-sama who has cleared all the trials!"

"Congrats!" "I always thought you'd become one!" "Counting on ya, Hero-sama!"

The audience praised me one after another.

Direct praises from a lot of people like these are also unfamiliar to me, it feels a bit ticklish.

I was guided to the VIP seats afterward.

At a place where you can see the arena below. The seats is on the third floor.

The king who grew mustache and had a crown on his head was waiting there.

I kneeled down and greeted him.

And then the king told me to stand up. His voice resounded clearly in the crowd you wouldn't have thought he was an old man.

"New hero Keika. You've done great to clear the trials. From now on, continue your training, save people from suffering, and search for the demon king. Become the true hero who will save this world from the demon king's hand. --Accept this."

The king brought a silver medal about the size of a palm. It's connected with chain.

I kneeled down and he put it around my neck.

I glance at the medal

【Emblem of Hero】 The right to investigate anything related to Demon King - Jurisdiction of anything related to Demon King - The right to enforce penalty to anything related to Demon King - Permission to locally procure necessary goods - Permission to pass any place - Exempted of any tax - Grant the skill tree of Hero

If I have this, I'm allowed to do anything on a matter related to Demon King.

If I were to suspect someone to be a pawn of Demon King, I can go to their house, search the inside, confiscate everything like medicinal plants or goods, and if I have proof that they're a pawn of Demon King, I'm even allowed to kill them on the spot.

--And since I'm a God, I can forge the evidence all I want.

I endure myself not to grin, and lower my head.

"Thank you your majesty. I will exert everything I have to exterminate Demon King."

"Umu.... could you show me the face of a new hero closer?"

"Yes? Yes, please."

I raise my face.

The king stared at my eyes. Transparent eyes as if they see through my innermost. And then he sighed weakly. Light of disappointment swayed in the eyes overlooking me.

"You have a good face. Please work hard as the new hero. Here's 50 gold coins as an outfit allowance."

He gave me a heavy pouch.

It's probably not small gold coins, if it's 50 big gold coins, that's 5 million yen huh.

"Thank you very much your majesty."

"Well then, good work everyone. Lastly, congratulation for him."

Clap clap clap, a grand applause. Someone even whistled.

I waved back at the people even though I sensed something odd with the king's behavior.

It was a parade until the inn.

People have gathered on both sides of the main street as they give congratulations.

"You did well!" "Thank you!" "I won big!"

Saying all they want to say.

A bandaged old man stepped forward along the way.

"Thank you for avenging me."

"Hm? Ah, you're the bread old man. It was just the right thing to do."

"As expected of hero-sama."

The old man lowered his head many times.

Now that townspeople who were troubled by Gaff knew that he was a bandit, my valuation as the one who beat him went through the roof.

At the same time I become the hero, no one in the Royal Capital doesn't know my name.

--Fumu. In order to spread my name more, I have to solve problems outside the Royal Capital and let rumors spread into cities.

I need great achievements in order to gather enough respect to become a god. However, those achievements can't be done by stealthily defeating the demon king while no one is aware, but by doing many deeds people can see.

It was more troublesome than expected, but the requirements to become a god are finally complete now.

"It's about time to depart...."

At my muttering, Celica who was walking next to me smiled with swaying blond hair.

When we came back to the inn, the tavern on the first floor had become a party venue.

The chairs have been removed, leaving only the tables as buffet.

Even the neighboring people have intruded in.

The old man came out of the kitchen.

"Keika! You did it! My eyes didn't fool me. Now come and eat! You can drink all you want too!"

"Thanks old man."

"It's nothing!"

The old man went back into the kitchen while laughing heartily.

Lapisia runs up to me with her blue twintail flowing behind.

"Kept Minya safe!"

"So you did. Good work, you're great Lapisia."

I asked her to guard Minya, since it'd have been troublesome if they took her hostage.

Lapisia is a child, but she's incomparably strong because she's a God.

When I patted her head, her golden eyes squint like it was comfortable, and then she laughed.

"Will work harder!"

"That's the spirit. Work hard in studying after you've had your fill."

"Uu.... W-work hard...."

Her eyes rounded and her shoulders fell dejectedly. Her small body became gradually smaller.

I wryly smile and retract my words.

"No, you don't need to study today. You can play after you eat."

"Really!? Love Keika!"

Lapisia hugs me. Her slender arms fit just enough. Her flat small body is glued closely, it's hot.

"Alright now, let's eat."

"Okay!"

Lapisia went to the tables with swaying blue hair.

Afterward, I ate and drank while getting congratulated by many people.

Celica modestly stayed by my side.

She brought drink and food to me before they ran out.

She was all smiles all the time. Her blue eyes that were looking up at me were moist with joy.

I felt the greatest blessing coming from Celica who didn't say anything, I felt strangely happy from that and couldn't help but smile.

Midnight.

I'm alone with Celica in the inn room.

The party in the first-floor tavern continued on, I sometimes heard Lapisia's singing voice. Looks like she's playing as hard as she can.

Celica who's sitting next to me in the bed talks delightfully.

"Congratulations, Keika-sama. I always believed you'd become Hero."

"Sorry for all the trouble. --Ah, right."

I took out the pouch I got from the king that I put in my breast pocket.

"I've used quite a lot of Celica's funds after all. I'm making that up with this."

"My! That belongs to Keika-sama. My things also belong to Keika-sama. --I... I do too."

She said the last part in whisper. Her graceful face reddens as she looks down.

I pat her head. This blond hair really feels the best on my fingers.

"Don't say that. Then please look after it."

"Yes, I understand. I'll be Keika-sama's purse."

"Please do. --And, they're 50 big gold coins right."

"No, it seems these are not."

"Hm? Don't tell me it's small gold coins."

Celica took out the gold coin inside the pouch at my question.

I'm unfamiliar with the size of the gold coin her slender fingers are holding.

"The reward from the king is of mid gold coins. They're worth four small gold coin each."

The information about them came up when I stared at it with Truth Sight. One coin worths 20,000.

"Cheap! They should've given big gold coins."

"Apparently, they did give big gold coins in the past, but it was hard for the financial. However, giving 50 gold coins was a custom so they couldn't amend it, as a result, they created these commemorative gold coins."

"I see, cost reduction huh.... So the reason why I never see them is because they're commemorative gold coin not in circulation huh."

"That's right. And it's easier to use small gold coin or big gold coin, so..."

Celica let out a troubled smile.

Well, I got 1 million yen for free, so let's just consider it a good thing.

I speak while looking at Celica putting the gold coins away.

"I'm sorry for today. I made you become a decoy."

"Please, it was an honor to be of use."

"Were you not afraid?"

"That's...."

Celica shyly laughed like she couldn't answer it.

That behavior was just too cute, I reflexively hugged her slender shoulder. Her blond hair swayed and glittered.

Celica lets out a sweet sighing-like voice while snuggling on me.

"Au...."

"There might have been a better method. I'll keep you safer next time."

"Please Keika-sama, it was really nothing. You can keep having me go through dangerous situations. I'm glad just being able to become Keika-sama's strength."

Celica push her face on my chest like a cat. Her endearing warmth was transmitted.

"Thank you."

"That word alone makes me happy...."

"Stay next to me always."

For some reason, Celica's dazed blue eyes look up at me.

And then her cheeks gradually reddens, and she nods with a smile on her whole face.

"Yes, Keika-sama!"

The party's sound can be heard from afar.

I continued hugging Celica's soft body who's leaning to me while feeling the sound of the tavern afar.



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